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BANAKER'S AUTOBIOGRAPHY



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Brian Banaker's Autobiography



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Brian Banaker's Autobiography up to the Age of Twenty-four, Faithfully set down by W. B. Trites



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BOOK I

I

MY earliest memory is the Centennial. Though then but three years old, I still remember clearly three Centennial scenes.

One was a night scene. In a black night, seated in a huge landau, my father held me in his arms, and on every side dark, mysterious figures stirred and hurried. A tension was in the air: I awaited something: and, though this something promised to be pleasant, yet it was new, it was strange, it was unknown.—And suddenly swift shapes of flame shot in vast curves across the blackness of the night, flame rained in luminous flakes from a black sky, a golden glare filled my eyes, and, frightened out of my wits by these simple fireworks, I burst into tears.

Again I stood in an enormous hall, gazing with pleased bewilderment at long walls hung from ceiling to floor with horns of shining brass. The work of a noted maker of musical instruments, those horns of every shape were beautiful and huge; they glittered; I liked them. And yet, somehow, were they not frightening? So numerous, so big, so silent, all those great horns glittering at me from every side—yes, undoubtedly, they were very frightening. Some one whispered reassuring words; but no, I would not be reassured:

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that vast, tense, silent glitter was too ominous. And again I burst into tears.

Now I found myself at the door of a Turkish coffee-room. Turks, dressed like Highlanders, uttered deafening cries as they served Turkish coffee in tiny cups. A thin, elegant man in black fascinated me. Lounging in his chair, his top hat pushed back from his pale forehead, he drank Turkish coffee with an indifferent and languid air, the air of a man of the world. I liked his air very much. But those Turks! Their distracting shouts! And regarding them more closely, I perceived that they were huger than I had thought, their dress was stranger, their yells more deafening. Those deafening yells—they filled me with horror. Again some one whispered reassuring words, but again I wept, and the Turkish coffee-room vanished for ever.

I was born, in 1873, at Banaker House.

Banaker House was so huge that strangers often mistook it for a public institution. Of white marble, long and low, it stood upon a gentle eminence, its great façade looking southward to the sea.

A marble-paved portico ran the façade's full length. A descent of two shallow steps, the full length of the portico, led to the exceedingly ornate terrace, with its palms and fountains and brilliant flower-beds. A marble balustrade, a balustrade with vase-shaped balusters, bounded the terrace. Thence two stairways of marble descended to the velvet lawns with their enormous trees.

All the ground-floor windows opened, like doors, upon the portico, and from infancy I seem to have stood at this window or at that, looking forth across a smooth white marble pavement to the terrace, so crowded and alive with waving palms and plashing fountains and

nodding flower-beds; then, a little lower, to the dreaming lawns and their great oaks; then, lower still, the farmlands; and finally the blue blur of the sea.

And from infancy again I seem to have stood at the lofty entrance gates, whence Banaker House rose white against forest and sky. Its façade was topped by a marble balustrade with vase-shaped balusters like that which girt the terrace; and from the entrance gates the eye rested first on the long white line of the terrace's balustrade, and last on the long white line of the façade's, carved in ivory against the pure and sparkling and transparent blue.

We Banakers were great aristocrats. Two of our forbears had signed the Declaration. There had been governors among us, generals, bishops, libertines. The foundations of our line in America were humble, it is true; but abroad we traced our descent back to the Princes of Powys. (The Princes of Powys reigned in the seventh century in Wales.)

We Banakers were also very rich. Our wealth lay in New York land. This land had been a dump, the Banaker dump, a grey stretch of cinders sprinkled with old tomato-tins, old boots, old newspapers, old socks. Here goats had browsed. Here squatters had dwelt in tumbledown huts. Here hairy weeds of horrible odour had flourished. Here, all day long, grimy men and women and children had dug out of rubbish heaps rubbish that they carried away sadly at sunset in great bags.

That was many years ago. And now the Banaker dump, which my great-grandfather had tried in vain to sell for fifteen thousand dollars, was covered with shops, streets, horse-cars, and wan workers. The wan workers, by a lifetime of work, had increased the dump's

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value from fifteen thousand to two million dollars—and all this increase belonged to us!

My great-grandfather, he who had tried vainly to sell the Banaker dump for a song, died young. When his son, my grandfather, came of age, he entered into a heritage of eight hundred thousand dollars, the accumulation of his minority, and into an income of ninety thousand dollars, the Banaker dump's net rentals. He went abroad at once.

My grandfather, who had been very strictly reared by his uncle, Bishop John Bunyan Banaker of Nola Chucky, lived abroad for five years, and over his foreign sojourn I will draw a veil.

At the age of twenty-six he returned home. He brought back with him plans for a mansion by the French architect, Viollet-le-Duc. Upon this mansion he generously proposed to spend four hundred thousand dollars—all that remained of his minority's accumulation after those five red years in Paris—but, ere Banaker House was finished, more than twice the contemplated outlay had been swallowed up.

My grandfather also brought back with him a feeling of contempt towards America. This feeling endured until the outbreak of the Civil War, when, intoxicated by *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, he enlisted, received at Bull Run a bullet in the knee, and retired for six months to a hospital. Thence he emerged a stubborn, impregnable, one-legged patriot. And whereas, before the war, he had never wearied of pointing out in his quiet and obstinate way our American ignorance, provincialism and dishonesty, after the war he never wearied of pointing out our refinement, our independence, our delicate sense of honour. He loved us overmuch because he had given us

overmuch; and I best remember him, his long white beard pushed to the left, bending day after day above interminable histories of the Civil War, a corpulent and imposing figure, seated at a great desk, his crutches propped at his side. My grandfather loved to gather his brother veterans about him. He loved to discuss battles, calm amid a turmoil of tobacco smoke, spittoons and contradictory cries. I remember with shame how I used to laugh at his martial hobby, and how, when he awkwardly essayed to tell me war stories, I let him see that I was bored.

My father was tall, thin, ruddy. In his beautiful English clothes, which in the English manner he changed to accord with every occasion, he lounged upon the terrace in a lounge suit of grey flannel; he rode on the white sea beach in the trimmest, the most dashing and most elegant of riding costumes; in our seaward-fronting dining-hall he superintended great, confused dinners in the sharp black and white of evening dress, which made his thin face look very ruddy and his hair very bright.

His superb health threw a kind of radiance about him. When, walking buoyantly, smiling gaily, my father entered a room, he brought happiness in with him, happiness which he shared freely and lightly amongst all.

My father had no occupation, but he wrote a good deal. Seized with an idea, he would retire to his study, and for days on end devote body and soul to composition. Often he would work all night, forgetful of food, forgetful of sleep. And the tale produced with such fury would be always weak, always false, always sentimental to the point of sickliness—a tale, say, of an elderly cripple whose love, manifested in some incredible sacrifice, wins at last a beautiful girl's hand. And yet these

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ridiculous tales possessed a certain charm, the charm of my father's good, kind heart; and the magazines could never get enough of them.

My mother was a Virginian, Frances Temple of Templeton. The Temples, with their seven hundred slaves, their faded family portraits, their crested silver, and their friendship, kept up since colonial days, with the Earls of Templetown in Ireland, were really more aristocratic than the Banakers. But the war destroyed them, root and branch. Six Temples perished at Gettysburg. Templeton Hall was burnt. Northern patriots stole all the crested silver.

My mother had a violent temper and a tender heart, If I recall with repugnance her wild rages, I recall with a mournful pride her pity for all wretchedness, all failure, her pity for cowards, drunkards, thieves and murderers.

My mother was beautiful, elegant, proud. She loved fine clothes, magnificent jewels, superb equipages. She loved music and dancing. A worldly woman.

A worldly woman. But when, in my childhood, I was kept awake with the torture of earache or toothache, it was my mother's breast, not that of any nurse or governess, which comforted me in the strange, dark, silent hours before the dawn. I still remember the unspeakable solace of my mother's breast; I still remember the tenderness, the unspeakable tenderness, of her low voice, soothing my pain.

II

I REMEMBER the first time I was bad. I could not have been more than six years old. It all arose over a fairy tale.

My grandmother was reading me *Star Fairies*, a tale about a little girl who lay gazing drowsily at the stars one night. The stars slanted their long gold rays into her chamber, up to her bed, into her sleepy eyes—and suddenly she was aware of a host of fairies gliding with soft laughter down those bright beams. The fairies' robes of pale gossamer were blown backward, and they balanced themselves in their swift descent with extended arms and a flutter of iridescent wings. They entered in at the open window. Beautiful and gay, they caressed the little girl, they took her by the hand, they floated forth with her upon a glorious flight through all the wonders of star-land. The story, in the end, turned out to have been only a dream. But if one could dream such dreams as that!

I resolved to do so.

My bed was beside the open window, and, very silent, in a soft, delicious glow of fairy fancies, I retired at once.

"What makes you so quiet, Mr. Brian?"

"Oh, nothing," I replied.

Sarah, my grandmother's maid, drew back the curtains, lowered the light, and withdrew. Then, alone in the dark at last, I turned on my side and looked up into

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the deep, mysterious night, wherein floated innumerable stars. The stars seemed very friendly. They blinked and twinkled at me. And, as in the little girl's case, they advanced and retracted, like feelers, their long, fine, golden rays. The rays touched my eyelids, they receded, then they touched my eyelids again. O to dream of a host of fairies gliding joyously down them to my room! I thrilled at the thought, in fancy I saw myself sitting up hurriedly in my bed, I held out my arms to welcome those lovely visitants, and then——

I awoke. But a moment before, it seemed, I had lain in a golden rain of star rays, resolved to dream about the fairies, and now already it was broad daylight, time to get up. My resolve, then, had failed. I was profoundly disappointed. But in the press of other interests my disappointment soon passed.

My bath was the first interest. I would have a sea bath. So, as the tub filled, I said to Sarah:

“Sarah, get me some salt.”

“Very well, Mr. Brian. But what do you want salt for?”

“To put in the water—to make it like the sea.”

For the sea foamed and thundered, rolling great surges to the shore. The wild and glorious sea differed altogether from a river's or a bath's dull calm. What caused this difference? Salt, I reasoned, caused it. Sea water was salt; river and bath water fresh; and therefore, by putting salt in my tub, I would have a miniature Atlantic, roaring and foaming, to bathe in.

But alas, though I poured spoonful after spoonful of salt into the bath, nothing happened. The water remained calm. Here was another disappointment.

But Sarah lifted me forth. I kicked and squirmed.

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Breakfast, however, was ready. And suddenly I perceived that I was hungry, and in the flurry of a swift toilet the bath vanished from my mind.

After breakfast I remembered my dream again. What must I do to dream without fail to-night about the star fairies? Plainly my best course would be to saturate my mind with the star fairies' story. Accordingly, in search of a reader—for I had not yet learned to read—I wandered over the gardens, book in hand.

But the gardeners, at work upon the terrace, among the palms and flowers, refused my supplications. My grandfather, portly and white-bearded, sat in a striped marquee on the lawn with his cigar and crutch and Grant's *Autobiography*: he would gladly have read to me, I knew, but I kept on my way, for I never felt at ease in my grandfather's presence. At last I came to the stables, where a great bustle of horse-cleaning and carriage-washing went on; but the busy stablemen bade me begone, and I returned disconsolate to the house.

My aunt was now up. She sat in her dressing-room in a pale blue dressing-gown, while Sarah brushed her yellow hair. "Won't you read to me?" I implored. "Just one story?" And—so little was I—I leaned my elbows on her knee as an adult leans on a balustrade, and I looked up in her face wistfully.

"Very well," she said. "I am riding with Count Martelli at eleven, but there's time for one story, I suppose. Only one, though. What shall it be?"

"*Star Fairies*," I said eagerly.

The tale began. It was divine. And then, almost at once, like a thunderclap, eleven struck, and my aunt, despite my heartbroken protestations, closed the book.

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I begged her to go on. She refused, smiling obstinately. I pleaded, I implored. In vain. And perceiving at last the hopelessness of my supplications, I gave way to rage. I doubled my little fist, considered for a moment the pros and cons of the deed I contemplated, and then struck my aunt full and hard on the nose. The smarting pain of the blow brought tears to her eyes. I stared in awe at those tears. Then, overcome with fright, I fled bareheaded from Banaker House.

I hurried down Oak Lane. My crime shocked me, filled me with horror. And yet, hatless and alone like this, the great world and the beautiful summer day before me, I experienced a sensation of wild, reckless freedom. It was a pleasant sensation. I began to hop and skip. Had I thought of another crime, I would perhaps have committed it.

A policeman stood before the bakery. To avoid him—for policemen always filled me with vague fear—I ascended Briar Hill.

It was superb up there. White clouds floated in the blue sky. The oaks bent and rustled before a strong, pure wind. Swift shadows ran over the long grass. Forgetting my troubles, I capered on the green slopes.

I came upon a group of giants with bows and arrows who played at being Indians. They seized and would have burnt me at the stake, but I roared with fright, and they released me in disgust. Under a great tree I came upon another giant group that passed a smoking tobacco pipe from hand to hand, while in their midst a red-haired giant lay, pale and groaning, on the turf. Then I came upon a group of my own age, and the next moment I stood upon a log, reciting an obscene couplet to them.

Where had I heard that couplet? I do not know. I do not know, indeed, whether I grasped its meaning. Yet I grasped its unspeakable wickedness, and I felt a kind of satanic pride as, high upon my log, I chanted the vile words over and over, while my tiny auditors gazed up at me with awed looks.

"Brian," cried Ned Farplug, "I'll tell your father if you don't stop that."

With a mocking smile I continued my monotonous sing-song, and Ned Farplug hurried away.

More boys gathered about me. I raised my foul chant to a louder key. Little upturned faces wagged in awe and horror. Little voices piped reproof. I kept on. My satanic pride grew and grew.

Ned Farplug returned, leading Calhoun Clay.

"Why, Mr. Brian!" said Calhoun.

I ceased my chant. I descended from my log sheepishly. "I don't care," I said.

"And where's your hat? You'll get a sunstroke, bareheaded like that. Have you lost your hat, Mr. Brian?"

"No," I answered.

Grasping Calhoun's black hand, I ascended Oak Lane.

"Is my father home?" I asked.

"Yes, Mr. Brian. He's waitin' for you in the library. You'll catch it, I expect."

"I don't care," I repeated faintly.

At the chemist's Calhoun bought a toothbrush. Then he took me straight to Banaker House, and, knocking at the library door, he handed the toothbrush and me over to my father.

My father wore a look of melancholy. "Come, Brian," he said, and he led me to his bathroom.

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There he unwrapped the new toothbrush. He took from a cabinet a new cake of soap. Wetting the brush, he rubbed it over the soap till he had got an abundant lather.

"Now, Brian," he said, and he clasped the back of my head firmly in his great hand, bent me over the bath-tub, and held the toothbrush, white with foam, close to my nose—"Now, Brian, I am going to wash your mouth out with soap and water. Your mouth must be very filthy to have uttered such filthy words."

"No," I protested; "no."

But the tooth-brush drew nearer. I compressed my lips. My father's clasp tightened. My head was pushed downward.

"Open your mouth."

"No," I murmured faintly.

"Open your mouth, I say."

I opened my mouth, and the toothbrush began its cleansing work. How vile the soap tasted! In silence, with closed eyes, I squirmed and grimaced. My head was bent over the bath-tub. From my lips great flakes of lather fell. Now and then I uttered faint grunts of horror. Hours passed, or seemed to pass.

At last my father desisted.

"There," he said, in a friendly and pleasant voice, "there, that will do, I think. Rinse your mouth, Brian."

I opened my eyes and looked up at my father. He was smiling, my heart lightened, and I, too, smiled. With glass after glass of warm water, I tried to wash the mouth of its vile taste of soap. All was over. Heaven. I had expiated my sin. I was a good boy no more.

But suddenly my aunt appeared in the doorway.
“Brother,” said my aunt, “that wretched boy—he
actually struck me—with his fist—on the nose!”

III

IF my grandfather were alive to-day, his war stories would be heard with deepest interest. He, a veteran of the Rebellion, would be looked upon with reverent eyes. But my grandfather died, alas, over thirty years ago, and over thirty years ago the ubiquitous veteran, with his interminable yarns, with his old, wrinkled face set in coarse grey beard, with his crutch, or stick, or empty sleeve, was deemed, at least by little boys like me, a nuisance and a bore.

My grandfather's death affected me little. He died, at the age of seventy-one, when I was eight. And to the little boy of eight that silent, grim old man, that old man whitened and withered by time, seemed no more human, no more to be loved or pitied, than a granite rock, a shaggy winter hillside.

I best remember my grandfather presiding at his dinner parties. These dinner parties were given, about once a week, in our Louis Quinze dining-hall of mahogany and gold, a room so lofty and so spacious that in it the table, no matter how many covers it was set for, always seemed too low and too small. For the most part my grandfather's guests were New York and Philadelphia aristocrats, old men in frock coats and old women in high-necked gowns of grey silk, with here and there a one-armed or one-legged veteran, and here and there a younger pair, friends of my father and mother, in all the elegance of evening dress. The cooking was

Southern: okra, Sallie Lunn, smothered chicken, corn pudding: all very delicious, all very heavy and rich. The wines were port and Madeira equally delicious, equally heavy and rich. The solemn talk would be of politics, the last biography, Tennyson's or Longfellow's new volume; while now and then a veteran, displaying the flattened bullet that dangled from his watch-chain, would tell an attentive lady how the missile had pierced his gastrocnemius at Chickamauga, shattered the tibia, grazed the fibula, and embedded itself finally, etc. With his long and pointed white beard my grandfather, enormous, majestic, silent, presided solemnly over the repast. Old Wash White, his "body servant," stood behind him. Our aged butler, Hampton Rhodes, with low sighs hobbled softly from chair to chair, a bottle of Madeira in his black hand; while Joe and Jim, Hampton Rhodes's young assistants, served the various courses in a polite, amiable, slapdash manner, often chuckling at a guest's joke, often "answering back" if rebuked for spilling this or that.

My grandfather's regular and tranquil life, together with his inability to exercise, had fattened him enormously. He was afflicted, furthermore, with rheumatism, so that it took him, assisted by Wash White, two or three minutes to rise from his chair. He rose in jerks, with groans, and grunts, and jerky, repressed cries. Often, nearly risen, he would sink back again with a sigh of despair. He would rest a moment, breathing heavily, then he would frown, take Wash's arm anew, and begin anew that painful struggle. With eyes of pity and awe my grandmother and aunt would look on in tense attitudes, restraining themselves with difficulty from rushing to my grandfather's aid; while I would

look on with disgust—the cruel disgust which youth always feels for the ugly infirmities of age.

Save for his hour's drive in the morning and his hour's nap in the afternoon, my grandfather spent the whole day at his desk, reading and annotating war papers, sometimes even writing a war paper himself. Often I would peer in upon him from the doorway with a sneer. His Louis Quinze bureau was set in a spacious bay-window looking forth over the green expanse of terrace and lawns and descending farmlands to the blurred blue shimmer of the sea; and here, in a profound silence, he sat eternally, now reading, now puffing thoughtfully at his cigar, now making a note. How, I would wonder in scorn, could he content himself like that! And often, after luncheon, attracted by his snores, I would approach him on tiptoe. I would bend over him as he slept on his huge sofa. His raucous snores shook him as its engines shake a steamer. And I examined his bald head closely, I almost dared to touch it. And I wondered what it felt like to be so old, so fat, with a beard so long and white, with a scalp so nude and smooth and lustrous!

We all dined together at seven, but after dinner, as a rule, we separated, my father and mother retiring to their apartment in the west wing, while my grandfather, grandmother and aunt played backgammon till nine, read aloud till ten, and concluded the evening with a glass of wine and a plate of sandwiches. When my lessons allowed, I participated in those backgammon games, those readings, and those delicate, fresh sandwiches of chicken, ham and tongue. The winter wind roared without, in the great chimney a fire of birch logs blazed, my grandfather took up book and spectacles from

the table at his side, and in a huge armchair before the flames I sat enrapt in the adventures of Robinson Crusoe, Lemuel Barker, Copperfield, or Ivanhoe. Beautiful evenings, serene and happy evenings!

Thus tranquilly, after his wild youth, my grandfather passed his latter years, day by day growing weaker, fatter, stiffer. But I never heard him complain. I never heard him bewail time's swift flight, or his rheumatism, or his corpulence, or the near approach of death. Tall, with his enormous breadth of back, his enormous paunch, his broad chest swept by the long, snowy beard trimmed to a point, he accepted old age with its infirmities and terrors calmly and silently—as, I am persuaded, he accepted at Bull Run the bullet that robbed him of his leg.

And finally death came.

I knew from the beginning that my grandfather's illness would be fatal. I knew it from the gloom of my father's manner, from the hushed, frightened looks of the servants, and from the grief, the inextinguishable grief, in my grandmother's faded eyes.

Physicians from New York (elderly men in frock coats and shortish trousers bagging at the knees) held daily consultations at my grandfather's bedside. Two nurses were in attendance. A doctor slept in the dressing-room.

Now and then, at my father's or grandmother's request, I would go shrinking into the death chamber. I see it now, most vividly, as I write. I see the spacious room, the canopied bed, the medicine bottles. I feel again the bustle, the excitement, and the despair. My poor grandfather, his long white beard all dishevelled, turns from side to side in an agony of pain. Some

one whispers him of my presence. . . . Thirty years have passed since then, but, as though it were yesterday, I see my grandfather stop his restless tossing, I see him smooth with an effort his old, kind face knotted with pain, I see his eyes rest pathetically, helplessly in mine. The old, dim eyes, about to leave life, look into the young eyes just entering life. "Good afternoon, Brian; I hope you are well," the old voice pants feebly.

My grandfather died in October, under the deep blue of an October sky, when all the landscape in the October sunshine was a gilt splendour of goldenrod. I felt no sorrow at his death. I had expected it for a fortnight, and it came as a relief.

The old aristocracy of New York, Knickerbocker families, the descendants of Dutch labourers, appeared in force at the funeral. The old aristocracy of Philadelphia, descendants of English labourers, likewise appeared in force. There was a sprinkling, too, of the proud, tobacco-chewing aristocracy of the South. But the veterans present preponderated over the other guests.

The funeral service was held in the blue drawing-room. Across the seaward-fronting windows the curtains were drawn: each window in the soft gloom was a panel of honey-coloured light: and upon the faded blue of the Aubusson carpet and upon the faded tapestry of the Louis Seize chairs gold bars of sunshine trembled.

During the service I shared an ottoman near the coffin with Harry Dorsey, a boy cousin. Harry, though smaller than I, appeared to want more than his half of the ottoman. Now and then I had to push him back with my hips.

A choir of girls sang "Safe in the Arms of Jesus." The melting sorrow in their young, sweet voices brought

home to me at last my grandfather's death, and for pity of the old and patient veteran I wept bitterly.

Whilst weeping I looked about me—at my mother, at certain cousins, at my busy father, now whispering in the undertaker's ear—and I noted, with a feeling of superiority of which I was ashamed, that nobody wept with anything like my own passionate grief.

But Harry Dorsey kept encroaching on my half of the ottoman. I was continually obliged to push him back. He resisted. And we contended then with all our strength. Yet in this contest we observed the proprieties, we pushed only with our hips, and Harry's face wore a look of subdued grief, while down my own the tears coursed. And they were honest tears. Yes, while struggling with Harry Dorsey, while hating him with my whole heart, I still wept in sincere sorrow for my grandfather, I still noted with a superior feeling that no other mourner in the blue drawing-room sobbed so passionately as myself, and of this abominable feeling of superiority I still felt ashamed. To hate one person while weeping for another, to be proud of oneself and at the same time ashamed of one's pride, and simultaneously to carry on a physical combat with violence and decorum—such was the complexity of my conduct during my grandfather's funeral.

IV

THE midsummer afternoon was bright and beautiful. From the sky's blue radiance poured floods of splendid sunshine. I sat in the shade, on a marble bench, with my Hans Andersen. The foliage above me rustled in a little breeze.

But Hans Andersen would not content my heart. My heart, that shining afternoon, shouted for some new experience, some adventure strange and joyous.

So I rose. I mounted from the chestnut wood to the golden shimmer of the terrace. I sauntered dolefully down pebbled paths, past sparkling flower-beds and silver fountains. Then I leaned on the balustrade and looked out upon the pale green countryside.

The crystal air danced in the heat. The river, very blue, curved down and disappeared behind a hill. A few tiny figures of farmers toiled in tiny fields. The sea, far away, was a soft blue mist.

With a sigh, my hands behind my back, I paced the marble portico. But Calhoun Clay in his dove-coloured livery swung open the door of Banaker House, and I entered into the faint, cool splendours of the marble hall.

"Where is your governess, Mr. Brian?"

"Mademoiselle Colette is asleep. I wish," I added fretfully, "I could have some fun."

"Fun is what we're all after, Mr. Brian."

"Grown people never have any fun," said I.

"Don't they? Oho, don't they!"



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I sauntered upstairs to my playroom. I moved discontentedly amongst bright shapes of rocking-horses, engines, soldiers. My bank caught my eye.

I took my bank in my hand. It was heavy with hoarded wealth. And as all those coins emitted their agreeable clink, I realized that in my bank lay the remedy for my discontent.

With a buttonhook I silently extracted a half-dollar and stole forth.

Tommy Rowe and the Farplug brothers, Clarence and Ned, were gathered about Mulberry Spring, Ned was drinking water with a solemn air from a cocoanut shell.

"Hello!" I said.

"Hello! Hello, Brian!"

Ned alone paid me no heed. He finished his cocoanut shell slowly, replenished it, and muttered, "Eight."

"He's drunk eight shells now," said Clarence Farplug. "I have drunk twelve. Tommy drank seventeen."

But I displayed my half-dollar, and the drinking contest was at once forgotten. They crowded about me. A chorus of delight went up.

"What will you do with it?"

"What are you going to buy?"

"I don't know," I said gaily. "Let's get some cigars and cigarettes and sourballs at Rice's."

Skipping and gambolling, we descended Oak Lane. I was no longer discontented. The joy of the blue and pure and radiant sky was now no greater than the joy of my own heart.

I bought at Rice's six sourballs, three cigars, and a box of Turkish Patrol cigarettes that took my eye because they had glass mouthpieces.

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Then, each with a sourball distending his cheek, we loitered up and down the Main Street. The Main Street drowsed in a white glitter of sunshine. Under rows of maples the shopkeepers nodded in armchairs on the sidewalk. Now and then a horse-car rumbled slowly by with a tinkle of little bells.

"Let's hire Rudy's boat," said Clarence Farplug.

"Yes! And we can smoke in the boat," said I.

We crossed the pay-bridge, descended the steep river bank, and hired Rudy's vast yellow boat for an hour.

Forth we fared gloriously then upon the sunlit river. Tommy and Clarence each pulled with might and main at a huge oar, but we only moved at a snail's pace. The boat's head veered erratically. Sometimes it turned quite round in an unaccountable circle. Sometimes, too, an oarsman caught a crab and, silent and perturbed, fell back heavily on the bottom. His skull struck the bottom with a sharp report. But he made no complaint. In frowning haste he scrambled up and resumed his oar again, unmindful of our jeering laughter.

We came slowly to the Hornet. There four young men in brilliant rowing dress feasted on the rock, their long, slim, polished skiff drawn up beside them. They said we would be drowned, and for retort we boastfully displayed our cigars and cigarettes as we zigzagged by.

We came to the Diver. There Crutch O'Neill and a naked band of desperadoes from the Lower End disported in the deep water. With delight and awe we watched their marvellous back headers and aerial somersaults. But they swam out and surrounded us, seized our oar blades, and threatened to overturn Rudy's boat. Then I hurriedly distributed Turkish Patrols among them, and they became my friends. They swam home

at last, to escape the payment of bridge toll, their clothes tied on their heads, and their shoes hanging from their mouths. Superb creatures! If we, too, when we grew to be eleven or twelve, might but resemble them!

"Shall we smoke now?" said Tommy Rowe.

And gingerly, in the middle of the stream, we lighted our Turkish Patrols. We smoked slowly. We coughed and spat a good deal. We agreed that the Turkish Patrols were excellent. Yet I, in my secret heart, was overwhelmed with disappointment and disgust. Could it be that tobacco, the beloved of all mankind, really tasted like this? My Turkish Patrol, so seductive to the eye with its glass mouth-piece, its golden filling and its snowy wrapper, filled my mouth with fumes poisonously bitter and revolting. After a few whiffs I threw it away. My comrades soon followed my example. Yet we were not in the least sick, and we boasted, zigzagging on the sunlit river, of the zest wherewith we would consume our black cigars later in the afternoon.

Returning Rudy's boat, we began to spend money again in the Main Street shops. We gorged ourselves with licorice-root, Scotch cakes, jawbreakers and rock candy. Our pockets bulged with all manner of sweets.

But it grew intolerably hot, and we mounted to the Showery for a bath.

The Showery was a delightful pool for little boys like us who could not swim—a silver cascade falling from Briar Hill into a basin of grey rock.

We undressed on the basin's clean grey edge, we plunged into the crystal pool, with joyous cries we stood under the cascade, letting the silver shower beat heavily on our shoulders and backs. We swam with

one foot on bottom, knowing well that this is the only way to learn really to swim.

And how pleasant it was, after the bath, to sit and dress slowly on the rock! Our blood was cooled by the water. We were cleansed and refreshed through and through. In the sunshine, so intolerable a while ago, we now basked as deliciously as before a fire on a winter day.

But our black cigars were still to smoke. The thought terrified us. But it was our duty to smoke those black cigars, we must not be cowards; and so we climbed up on to Briar Hill, seated ourselves on the green turf of a secluded grove, and slowly lit up.

My cigar, to my amazement, was agreeable.

"It tastes good," I said. "It is sweetish. I like cigars better than cigarettes."

"So do I," said Ned Farplug.

"The tobacco is sweet to chew, too," said Clarence. "Chew the end, Ned. Like this. Look."

And in a veritable tobacco orgy the two Farplug brothers blew forth swift clouds, while at the same time they chewed the ends of their cigars into a shapeless, glutinous mass.

But Tommy and I were cautious, barely keeping our cigars alight, holding them at arm's length, and only at rare intervals taking a gentle puff.

Five minutes passed.

"I don't care much for these," said Tommy. He regarded his cigar, a third of which was now consumed, with a critical air. "Let's throw them away."

"Yes, let's," said I.

"No, no; they're too good," said Clarence Farplug, still smoking furiously.

"They're fine," said Ned; and with quick, vigorous puffs he kept pace with his beloved elder brother.

The two Farplugs sat side by side. They smoked like steam engines. Now and then they measured the length of their cigars one against the other, exchanging affectionate fraternal smiles.

But, as for me, I found the tobacco more and more poisonous. It caused the saliva to gather in my mouth in floods. To swallow this saliva was a loathsome and sickening impossibility. Hence, every moment, I must spit and spit.

Soon I became aware of a disagreeable languor, a kind of faintness, and I lay back on the grass.

I lay on my side, gazing in dreamy disgust at my half-lit cigar. Though I held it far away, its blue, thin thread of smoke kept curling up into my nostrils, like a tiny snake.

At long intervals I put the cigar to my lips, and, with my whole being in revolt, blew forth a small cloud.

In the dreamy languor that enveloped me the voices of my friends sounded faint and far away. They conversed gaily. It was plain that they were made of manlier stuff than I.

My head began to ache. I closed my eyes. This seemed to ease my throbbing temples. Now and then a convulsive shudder racked me from stem to stern. The cigar dropped from my lifeless fingers. The saliva welled up in my mouth in such astonishing abundance that, spit as I would, I could not keep pace with it. It overflowed. No matter. I would sleep.

When I awoke the sun was low, and the twilight's luminous peace bathed the green earth. I felt quite well, save for a touch of headache. Tommy Rowe had

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disappeared, but Clarence and Ned Farplug lay, back to back, on the grass.

I rose and looked at the brothers with repulsion. Their eyes were closed. Sick almost to the point of coma, they answered none of my questions, and, when I shook them, they only groaned. Now and then, without lifting their pale cheeks from the grass, without opening their eyes, they retched noisily, violently, yet with an air of boredom and disgust.

V

IN my grandfather's time all our servants were negroes: a happy, faithful crew. They kept Banaker House none too clean, my father said. Nevertheless I liked them better than the staff of whites by whom they were in the end to be supplanted.

And as I think of them, my mind goes back to Hattie Clay and her husband, Cal, to the dinner party that my father gave in Jeremiah Ludlow's honour in the summer of '83, and to the "shoutin'" in the evening on the lawn.

Hattie Clay was our cook, a slim girl of twenty, the daughter and granddaughter of Richmond chefs. It is impossible to exaggerate the pride that Hattie took in her cooking. Yet she hid this pride under an air of languor and scorn.

Cal, her husband, was the right hand of our aged butler, Hampton Rhodes. Cal was good-looking, and Hattie frequently charged him with infidelity. But Hattie, too, was good-looking, and was herself frequently charged with infidelity by Cal.

The afternoon of the Jeremiah Ludlow dinner, I visited, as was my wont, our light, clean, spacious kitchen. Hattie's assistants, two old negresses, limped hither and yon, beside themselves lest something might go wrong; and, as they cut up potatoes in pans of clear water, as they sliced corn from the cob, as they scurried heavily from stove to table, their wrinkled black hands shook,

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and under their tiny, upstanding, hornlike plaits of grey wool their wrinkled black faces twitched with excitement and anxiety. But Hattie lounged from one great pot to another, languid, indifferent and scornful beyond belief.

This air of hers was, I am sure, assumed. She assumed it in order to heighten, by contrast, the effect of her exquisite cooking. No one, really, took cooking more to heart. If Hattie had a failure, she became almost ill: she went at once upon a brief holiday: a failure, she explained, made her loathe a kitchen. But Hattie's failures were very, very few.

Now, as she skinned a ham, a tramp appeared at the open door.

"Look at the peach-pluck," she drawled, in her sweet voice. "He's comin' here a-beggin'." She turned to one of her assistants. "Give him a sandwich, Aunt Caroline."

And as the tramp departed, head down, munching away, Hattie murmured, thoughtfully and disdainfully:

"Beggin'! Coloured people wouldn't beg. They'd steal first."

"I'd rather steal than beg," said I—"if I didn't get caught," I added.

Suddenly, with an air of truculence and menace, the tall, amber-coloured Cal entered the kitchen. Cal's head was thrust out, his fists were clenched, and, as he swaggered towards Hattie with hunched shoulders and crooked arms, his gait was slow and stately, like a war-dance.

"Whar was you last night?" Cal said, and he bent over his wife, shoulders hunched, arms crooked, fists clenched, a dreadful figure.

Hattie's languor vanished. She stiffened like a steel bar.

"Whar was you yourself?" she said, sneering up into Cal's face with defiance and scorn.

Cal began to circle terribly about her. Hattie, rigid and embittered, turned slowly on her heel, so as to face him always. The two old mammies and I looked on in silence, deeply impressed. This conjugal quarrel, unlike the ugly conjugal quarrels of whites, had in it something decorous and imposing. It seemed almost to follow a certain ritual. More than ever it resembled a dance.

Cal circled slowly round and round. "Whar was you, woman, I ask?"

Hattie, always facing him, turned slowly on her heel. "Whar was you yourself, man?"

Suddenly, with a cry of despair, Cal threw his arms heavenward and ran at full speed from the house.

"Humph," said Hattie.

And her languor returned. She kneaded a Sallie Lunn with lazy indifference. Some ten minutes passed. And then, in the brilliant June sunshine, Cal was to be seen advancing through the kitchen garden. He passed us slowly, a look of peace upon his face. He even gave Hattie, as he sauntered by her window, a glance almost friendly.

Thereupon she became silent and distraught. Finally she said:

"I'll just slip over to the house and see what he's been up to."

And she drew on her blue sunbonnet, passed down the kitchen garden's sun-drenched path, and disappeared behind a green wall of pea-vines. We waited in silence. And suddenly we heard a wild shriek.

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"Come here, you all! Come here and see what he's done!" Hattie cried.

We hurried, Aunt Caroline and Aunt Martha and I, down the path to the servants' settlement—a row of little white houses fronting a green.

We entered Hattie's small, clean house. In the middle of the floor lay a mound of ruined clothing, a bright-hued mound from which, as we entered, Hattie lifted a pink blouse. Slashed with crisscross strokes of the shears, the blouse, as she raised it, became a long, pink line in her hand.

"For the land's sakes!" said Aunt Caroline, and she examined three great hollow circles of black cloth, all that remained of a skirt that had been cut off at ankle and at knee.

"And look at this hat!" said Aunt Martha. "Hashed up!"

"What's the world comin' to?" said Aunt Caroline. She laid together in a heap the six or seven fragments of a red coat. "My Lil cut up Webster's clothes last year, too."

I lifted ruefully a long white fringe that had once been a petticoat. "Will you cut up Cal's clothes, Hattie?" I asked.

"I surely will," she replied—"if I can find 'em. He's hid 'em, of course."

We continued, in melancholy silence, with shocked looks and mournful shakes of the head, our slow examination of the mound. Skirts, blouses, petticoats, hats, all were slashed beyond hope of reparation. Hattie had nothing left to wear except the kitchen uniform she stood in.

"It was such a fine line of clothes," she said sadly,

as she turned at last to depart. "Such a fine line. But it's only fit for the rag-bag now."

And she and I set out for Banaker House again. But Aunt Caroline and Aunt Martha remained behind, clawing over the remnants carefully. They were sure, they said, that there were many things here which they could utilize.

Musing upon marriage, I made my way across the gardens to the terrace. There my aunt and Jeremiah Ludlow were drinking tea at a little table beside a fountain.

"Cal has cut up Hattie's clothes," I said.

My aunt and Jeremiah laughed in astonishment. "He has!" they cried. "Why?"

"Oh, a quarrel," I answered. "Cal wanted to know where Hattie was last night, and she wanted to know where he was, and they had a quarrel, and he cut up her clothes. It's often done. Look at Lil and Webster."

My aunt and Jeremiah laughed again.

"What are you laughing at?" I said. "Don't you think it's a shame to lose all those clothes?"

And I began to walk, balancing carefully, round and round the marble rim of the fountain. Expecting crumbs, the goldfish in the marble basin followed me with uplifted heads. A cool breeze made all the terrace's bright-hued patternings of flowers nod gaily. Palms swung their long arms with a swishing sound. White cloud masses floated across the blue sky. Far away the blue sea shimmered in the sun.

"So Martelli has gone back to Italy again," said Jeremiah, in a relieved tone, and he gazed tenderly at my aunt.

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But my aunt started from his words as from a pin-prick. She bent upon him a cold, offended, astonished stare. It was quite as if he had taken the liberty of pricking her, in limb or bosom, with a pin. "Yes, Count Martelli has gone back," she answered; and in a hard voice she began to contrast the American with the foreign male.

My aunt was pretty, though to me she never seemed so. She was to me but a disagreeable enigma, and I continually asked myself how it could be that a young woman so dull and stolid and silent when alone with us at home became always so extraordinarily vivacious in the presence of young men. I wanted to warn young men against her, to tell them that this gay, bright-eyed, high-coloured creature was not my aunt's real self.

Jeremiah Ludlow, on the other hand, I thought ideal. Yet in truth there was nothing ideal about him. An aristocrat, a typical American aristocrat, seventh lineal descendant of a Boston carpenter, Jeremiah Ludlow had for his keynote self-satisfaction. But this self-satisfaction was erroneous and deluded. Thus, because he had acquired the rudiments of Latin and Greek at Harvard, he was as self-satisfied about his learning as any cloistered scholar. Because he was descended from a pre-Revolutionary carpenter, he was as self-satisfied about his lineage as any Hapsburg. He walked with the swagger, precisely similar to a "buck nigger's," which Harvard stamps upon her sons; and this swagger, so ludicrous and vain, so silly and pretentious, seemed the perfect expression of his groundlessly self-satisfied soul. At Harvard he had signed his name "Jeremiah Ludlow, 7th."

But there was another side to him, a business side;

and, thanks to business deals and dickers, Jeremiah, at the age of thirty-two, was already rich. He would have been still richer but for his aristocratic side, which prevented him from giving to business the absolute devotion found in a Rockefeller or a Sage. There were moments when Jeremiah, enrapt in dinner dances or garden parties or love, forgot his deals and dickers. In those moments the Sages and the Rockefellers forged powerfully ahead.

Well-pleased with his lineage, his learning and his vocation of business man without any right whatever to be well-pleased—such was Jeremiah Ludlow as to his interior. His exterior was in our showy American way handsome—a big, robust, swaggering exterior, a strong, smooth-shaven face like an actor's, brown, crisp hair, white teeth, and clear, bold, hard blue eyes.

My aunt handed him his third cup of tea.

"American men are so conceited, too," she said.

"Well, they've got a right to be conceited."

"You devote yourselves to business," she continued, "and you seem to think in your conceit that business success gilds over all your uncouth ignorance."

"Uncouth ignorance!" Jeremiah looked up from his sandwich with a frown. But his frown caused her to smile, and she resumed:

"Yes, uncouth ignorance. What do you know, for example, about books?"

"We've got our work to do, we business men. We have no time to dawdle over Longfellow or Whittier."

"You can dawdle over cocktails and musical comedies," said my aunt. "And pretty typewriter girls, too," she added, laughing tartly.

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"Pretty typewriter girls!" Despite his frown Jeremiah looked foolishly pleased. "No, sir! No time for that sort of thing, either."

"A woman can converse with a foreigner. But an American!"

"Well?"

"An American treats you with a kind of jocular patronage, as though you were a little girl. Conversation? Never! You can only sit and listen to his silly boasting about business. You must pretend to think him very wonderful and grand. Now and then he cracks a stale old joke, and you must laugh and laugh. But all the while you despise him in your heart."

"Dear me!"

"A foreigner dresses so much better, too."

Jeremiah, glancing down at his suit of shepherd's plaid, retorted:

"The American is the best-dressed man in the world."

"Pooh!" said my aunt. "The worst, you mean."

"The best-dressed," he repeated, "and the hardest-worked."

"Work?" said my aunt. "Why, you don't know what work means. To work is to do something useful. You don't work. You only swindle and cheat."

Out of patience at last, Jeremiah cried:

"No, we don't; oh, no. We are honourable. We earn our money. We don't marry for it."

My aunt started back as from another pin-prick. She gave Jeremiah another cold, astonished stare. Then she rose haughtily.

"When a foreigner of rank marries," she said, "there must be a dower, if he is poor." She frowned down at the gaudy Jeremiah in his garden chair. "Can't you

understand that?" she hissed. "Is a duke to go out bricklaying to support his duchess?"

"All the same," said he, "for a man to live on his wife's money——"

But my aunt turned away. "I think I'll go in," she said. And she went hurriedly down little white paths, between beds of bright-hued flowers, past fountains and palms, towards the enormous white façade of Banaker House. She crossed the marble portico, she vanished within the bronze doors.

Jeremiah rose and lighted a cigar. With a self-satisfied air he tugged at the bottom of his waistcoat, he arranged his cuffs and cravat, he glanced down at his glossy brown shoes and well-creased trousers of black and white check. I came and stood before him.

"You mustn't mind her," I said.

"Oh, I don't mind her," said Jeremiah. But suddenly he frowned, tossed his cigar into the fountain, and hurried after my aunt.

As for me, I mounted to the nursery and had tea with my governess, Mademoiselle Colette. After tea I read *The Ice Maiden*, thrilling and flushing to the story's beauty. Then, in the sunset light, I watched our guests arrive.

They came in shining and elegant broughams, victorias and landaus. They were young—my father's friends, not my grandfather's. There were no veterans among them, and no spittoons were needed for their entertainment.

I peered in on them from the ball-room as they dined, and it seemed to me that they sneered a little at Hattie's rich Southern cooking, at the wheezy decrepitude of our aged butler, and, at the slapdash elegance of our

young serving-men. Their sneers made me angry and ashamed.

After dinner they took their coffee out of doors in the blue dusk, tiny figures against the great façade of Banaker House. The tiny men in the black and white of evening dress, the tiny women in pale gowns, with the liquid radiance of diamonds trickling in necklaces and chains over their snowy bosoms, they sat, like elegant and gay groups of dolls, at tiny tables, or they leaned, side by side, on the marble balustrade, and looked out over the calm lawns with their great oaks.

As I prowled about in the dusk, I saw old Wash White approach my father; and I heard him say, with a bow and a scrape:

"Can we oblige with a shoutin', sah?"

Wash, my grandfather's valet, was a clergyman. His request elicited general laughter. A woman's soft voice asked:

"What is a shoutin'?"

"Oh, it's just a dance," my father said.

"No, sah. No, ma'am," said Wash. "A shoutin' ain't no dance, nuther. It's a rite."

"Now, Wash," said my father, "there's no difference whatever between a shoutin' and a dance."

"Yes, sah, thar is," said the old negro. "Ain't I told you often that in a shoutin' you don't lift the heel!"

"Well, go on with your shoutin', then. But don't lift the heel, mind."

On the lawn, beneath an oak, a score of negroes from the home farm waited. Uncle Wash descended to them. The shoutin' began.

Drawn up in single file, one behind the other, in a

circle of alternate male and female figures, the negroes struck up a weird hymn in their mellow voices, and they marched gravely round and round, gravely clapping their hands in time to the music.

But by degrees the music grew wilder, the decorous marching step was succeeded by a dancing step, the hand-clapping was accomplished with a leap and a wild gesture skyward. And in the soft, clear blue of twilight, on the velvet lawn, under the vast and venerable oak, the shoutin' turned to a sombre orgy. The melody grew weirder, sadder: a melody of the world's beginning, it evoked a picture of black and naked tribes making their hopeless supplications, in the dusk of primeval jungles, to a cannibal god fierce and capricious and hopelessly cruel. One behind the other they moved in a circle. Their white teeth glittered and their eyes rolled white in their black faces. Their slim bodies undulated passionately. They clapped their hands with a wild, stiff gesture heavenward. They created on our lovely lawn an atmosphere of the primitive swamp, its bestiality, its fervour, its gloom.

From the terrace the elegant men and women in evening dress, leaning on the low marble balustrade, looked down in silence. The blue dusk was spangled with faint stars. The lawns seemed vaster, more mysterious. The writhing bodies of the dancers were hardly to be distinguished in the gathering night. Here and there fireflies flashed their tiny lamps.

Growing weary of the shoutin', I wandered back to the kitchen. Aunt Caroline and Aunt Martha sat on the kitchen steps, and Hattie stood before them.

"Yes," Hattie said, as I approached, "it was the best suit he ever had. He never had a suit in all his

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life that fitted him like that one. I've heard him say so a thousand times."

"And did you cut it up, Hattie?" I asked.

"I certainly did," said she. She laughed her soft, sweet, mellow laugh. "And he never hit me a lick, nuther. He just looked at it, a-lyin' on the floor." She laughed again. "He was so sad. He just looked at it—so sad—and then he walked out without sayin' a single word."

"He's certainly a good husband," said Aunt Caroline. "Some men would have killed you for that."

"Killed her?" I cried indignantly. "Why, he cut up all her clothes, didn't he?"

"That makes no difference," said Aunt Caroline. "Most men would have killed her. Cal is certainly a good husband."

"I'm glad I done it," said Hattie. "As soon as it was done, I felt so calm. Not angry any more, nor nothin'. Just happy and satisfied and calm. I'm awful glad I done it."

"So am I glad," I said.

"You've certainly got a good husband," repeated old Aunt Caroline.

VI

MY father, following my grandfather's advice, had entered me, at the age of six, at the Banakerburg public school. Public school life would prevent me, it was thought, from growing up a snob.

I was a success at school. Liking my teachers, I desired that they like me; and therefore, to please them, I studied hard.

Thus I was liked, which was well; but I was also respected overmuch. "There's Brian Banaker," a teacher would say. "You can trust him—he never tells lies." Naturally such remarks made me feel small and mean; for I did, of course, tell lies now and again, and of course I was not always to be trusted.

One day, when I was nine years old, my teacher rose from her chair and said:

"I must go out for a few minutes. Brian, I appoint you monitor."

Reluctantly, with slate and pencil wherewith to note down the names of such pupils as might misconduct themselves, I took my stand beside Miss Anne's desk. She departed, and immediately the quiet school-room became a hell.

My friends hurled insults and spitballs at me. "Pet!" they cried. "Take that, pet!"

And missiles flew in all directions. Urchins wrestled in the aisles and ran across the desk tops. Even the

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little girls, usually so good in school, laughed and talked as though at play at home.

As for me, I would look gravely at some more turbulent lad until I caught his eye, and then I would pretend to write upon my slate.

"Don't you put my name down!" he would threaten uneasily.

But I, without replying, would stare at another turbulent lad, and again pretend to write.

"Pet!" jeered the Farplug brothers. "Teacher's pet!" Yes, my best friends jeered thus. I stood with bowed head in a volley of missiles, feigning to jot down this name and that. "Pet! Teacher's pet!" Is it any wonder I found irksome the respect which loaded monitorships and suchlike posts upon me—posts of trust and honour in my teacher's eyes, posts of shame and treachery in the eyes of my friends?

While all were bad during Miss Anne's absence, their combined badness was as nothing beside that of Tommy Rowe. Tommy wore a coat which must have been made over for him from his mother's—a black coat, very full in chest and skirt, with a double row of enormous white buttons down the front. In this garment the boy, short and broad and nimble, seemed everywhere at once. He walked across the desk tops on his hands. He pulled hair, pinched, wrestled. He even, at last, bounded like a young lion into the little girls' quarters, whereupon I pretended to take his name.

"Don't you report me, Banny!" he said, and, with his gay and formidable smile, he came half way down the aisle towards me, then stopped.

I made no reply.

"Have you got my name?" he said, and his smile

brightened into a madder and more dangerous gaiety.

I, as the etiquette of my monitorship required, still made no reply.

Then Tommy Rowe, all his huge white buttons glittering, dashed upon me. He feinted with his right hand at my head, I raised my slate, and with his left he planted a skilful blow upon my unprotected stomach. Instantly a roar of laughter filled the room, and Tommy ran back and sat down at his little desk again calmly. But as for me, the blow had doubled me up into a knot. Twisting and writhing, my slate pressed with both hands against my stomach, I gazed sorrowfully at the laughing faces of my school-mates, and in the struggle for breath I heard myself emitting strange, uncanny sounds, such as deaf mutes make.

"He'll have to fight Rowey now," the boys cried in glee. "Are you going to fight him, Banny?"

My breath came back at last. I ceased my uncouth noises and stood erect again. "Will you fight him, Banny?" Yes, I nodded. Yes, since honour required it, I would fight. But of course I would be beaten. I, so slight and thin, was a baby beside Tommy Rowe.

But steps were heard without, all disorder ceased at once, and Miss Anne entered a class-room silent and tranquil.

"Thank you, Brian," she said, and, glancing at my empty slate, she smiled and added, "Well, I'm glad you all behaved yourselves."

I returned sadly to my seat. How strange that all these boys, my friends a little while ago, were now my enemies! And how strange, how unjust that, because Tommy Rowe had struck me, I must fight!

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The May morning was warm and beautiful. The fresh foliage of a maple rustled before the open window. Airs delicate and soft caressed my furrowed brow.

We began to recite the multiplication table:

“Eleven ones are eleven,
Eleven twos are twenty-two.”

It was a very cradle song, that drawling croon. But, despite the languor and somnolence it breathed, my whole being was tense and aquiver with forebodings of the fight that lay before me.

“Eleven eights are eighty-eight,
Eleven nines are ninety-nine.”

Of course I would be beaten. Though taller than Tommy Rowe, I was frail beyond belief. Yes, I would be beaten. I would get a black eye, a bloody nose. I did not mind that, though. What I minded was—

“Twelve threes are thirty-six,
Twelve fours are forty-eight.”

No, I did not mind the physical pain of defeat. Boxing with Jack Mason, I had got many a black eye, many a bloody nose. Nor did I mind the obloquy of defeat, either. What I minded was—

But my thoughts would not face this problem. They fled before it like frightened birds.

“Take out your slates,” said Miss Anne.

A hundred slates rattled forth noisily, like the sabres of a smart regiment, and on their moist and greasy surface we proceeded to draw a conventionalized ivy leaf.

What did I fear? I did not fear bruises or defeat. I did not fear the fight itself—

I feared that I would be a coward!

Yes, that was what I feared. And a shiver ran over me, I breathed unsteadily, I could feel my heart beating.

But I kept up appearances, working steadily on my conventionalized ivy leaf, and once, as my pencil slipped and made no mark on a greasy portion of my slate, I looked up and caught the eye of Tommy Rowe.

He was regarding me strangely. And now, as he met my gaze, he smiled—a strange smile, devoid of its gay, cruel quality, a smile, it almost seemed, of friendship. But before my mind quite grasped this smile, I frowned and resumed my work. Afterwards, when I looked at him again, his head was turned away.

Fear possessed me, the fear of cowardice. In fancy I saw myself slinking out of the school-yard, pale, limp, as helpless in the grip of cowardice as in the grip of some narcotic drug. Tommy Rowe, smiling his hard, gay smile, followed me; he dared me now and then to fight; now and then he struck me, lightly, contemptuously. We were surrounded by a ring of yelling, jeering boys. The scorn, the scorn in all their voices! Yet I hurried on. I would not turn and face my foe.

This vision tortured me until—too soon—the morning session ended. As usual, on account of the excellence of my scholarship and conduct, I was the first boy to be dismissed. Passing down the aisle, I seemed to hear whispers, "Fight"—"Tommy Rowe."

In the school-yard I faltered. It was my duty, I knew well, to wait for Tommy. I wanted to wait—and yet I could not. But, though I retreated, I retreated slowly. Still striving to keep up appearances, I sauntered towards the Oak Lane gate with frequent stops.

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Near the gate I heard a shout—"Brian! Brian Banaker!"

It was Tommy's voice. I wanted to halt, to turn and face him bravely. And yet, against my will, I did not. I could not.

"He'll think I don't hear him," I said to myself. "I'll halt if he shouts again."

And walking a little faster, I passed out of the gate.

"Brian! Wait!"

And I did not halt.

"Banaker! Brian!"

The shouts were louder, near. The boys must know I heard them now. I had no longer any least excuse for keeping on. Yet on I kept, with hunched shoulders and bowed head, as though I walked in a rain of shame and woe.

What did I fear? I feared nothing that Tommy Rowe could do to me. What torture could Tommy Rowe inflict comparable with the torture I was enduring now? No, I feared nothing he could do.

The bakery was but a step away. I vowed that at the bakery I would surely, surely halt.

"Brian!"

Would I halt? Each step drew me nearer to the bakery. Would I halt there? Or would I still keep on, a coward, disgraced for life? A question never to be answered.

For the next moment Tommy Rowe overtook me, and I was surrounded by a dozen smiling boys.

"Here," said Tommy shyly, and he extended one of those green willow whistles which nobody could make so well as he.

"Want half, Brian?" said Clarence Farplug, and

he broke an apple in two with his strong hands and gave me the larger portion.

"Will you play this after", Brian? I'll lend you my bat."

I looked from one to another soberly. A great load of trouble rolled from me. I felt unspeakably relieved, yet of this relief I was ashamed.

In the eyes of these boys, then, I was not a coward, but a hero. Yes, they found something heroic in the generosity which had caused me to withhold the tale of their misconduct from Miss Anne.

But I, for all my honours, was wretched. My honours meant nothing to me. For the thing I had done had been done easily, without effort, without struggle, without any victory over self. Therefore, it seemed to me, I deserved no credit.

Yes, all these honours, being unmerited, were worthless. So I walked on amid them silently, sadly. Would I, I asked myself, would I have halted? Or would I have kept on past the bakery, a coward, for ever disgraced?

VII

IT was the first elevator I had ever entered. The attendant, grunting with the strain, gave a mighty pull upon a perpendicular cable, and we set off very slowly. Very slowly, very feebly, we rose from floor to floor. Reaching at last the eighth floor's dizzy height, we nodded to one another with smiles of delight and wonder.

"A skyscraper!"

Mr. Van Pool's office seemed incredibly high and luminous and airy. Down below it was hot; but a wind blew cool and steady up here. I stood by the open casement. I looked out over the blue bay flashing a million golden facets in the sun. I listened absently to the conversation of Mr. Van Pool and my father.

Their conversation soon became an angry argument. Mr. Van Pool, it appeared, had sold for my father a valuable piece of ground, and my father desired the proceeds of this sale to be invested in Count Martelli's name; but Mr. Van Pool insisted that they stand in the name of my aunt.

"Why Count Martelli's name?" I mused. "Is he going to marry her at last? Aha, so that is what he has returned for!" And my soul filled with hatred for this foreign husband who must be bought, like a rug or a gem, with money.

"Come now, George! In Margaret's name! I insist!"

"But I insist, too!"

"Why?"

"Because your way is impossible."

"Impossible, George?"

My father dropped his eyes. He looked angry and ashamed. "Quite impossible," he muttered.

"Very well," sighed Mr. Van Pool. "Of course that settles it."

And they proceeded to read and sign a number of stiff and rustling documents.

As we boarded the elevator again to descend, the lawyer said impressively:

"Sell no more city land, George; for this invention is going to double—positively double—the value of such land as yours. Heretofore hotels and apartment houses and office buildings have been limited in height to five stories—who would climb more? But now, thanks to the elevator, there's no reason why all these structures shouldn't run up to ten stories. Ten stories! Think of it."

"But why not fifteen stories?" said my father.

"No, no," the other answered. "That would make the walls too thick. There'd be no light."

We entered our hansom, and my father, as he settled his top-hat on his comely head, said with a scowl:

"I think I'll get rid of Van Pool."

"Why, father?"

"He's too officious. He can't mind his own business. Yet, undoubtedly, he's got my interests at heart."

Elevated trains shrieked and roared overhead. Cable-cars rumbled upon us, clanging their great gongs. Drays bumped recklessly over ruts and holes with a maddening clatter. Dust, bits of filth, and huge frag-

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ments of filthy newspaper were blown about by the hot wind, and in that sorry storm the endless, hurrying processions of lean workers bent forward, wiping their eyes, wiping their mouths. At every corner a pale, fat policeman, jaunty and unshaven, loafed, his body thrown well back to balance his huge, soft, loose stomach, the product of fifteen or twenty daily beers.

At the ferry our cabman's curses over the cabfare collected a jeering crowd. "Pay him his money!" the crowd roared. "Pay up there!" It was only by giving the cabman two dollars above his due that we managed to escape.

Brushing from our faces and dress the dried filth accumulated during our ride, we boarded the ferry-boat. Over the broad river, the ferry-boat nosed its way through water-melon and cantaloup rinds, corn husks, tomatoes, all manner of July garbage. We landed, we entered our train, and at last, with sighs of relief, we perceived that we were once more in the country—the open, fair, green country, which man had not yet found time to defile.

A glittering victoria awaited us at Banakerburg station, and with a shout of joy I ran to the beautiful, restive horses, patted their satin necks, and looked into their clear eyes. Shaking off my hand, they jingled their silver harness musically. The rosy coachman, in his summer livery of pale grey, smiled as he saluted my father with his whip. The groom, too, smiled, waiting by the step, little and slim and straight, for me to enter. "Come, Brian," said my father. And away we spun through white and silent lanes shaded by parallel rows of maples which made above our heads an endless arch of rustling green.

I lay back on the soft cushions. I admired the Victoria's swift and glittering and elegant perfection. How different this from the dusty equipages of my grandfather's time, with their old, fat horses, their greasy harness, and their coachmen and footmen slouching, round-shouldered and careless, in faded, ill-fitting liveries on the box.

Banaker House was full of guests on our arrival, and I was bidden to remain in my own quarters with Mademoiselle Colette. In the afternoon, however, I found time for a swim and a smoke with Tommy Rowe, and in the evening there was a concert in the ball-room which I was permitted to attend.

I entered the ball-room a full hour before anyone else, and, choosing a fauteuil in the middle of the first row of chairs, I waited, patient, motionless, silent, with my head tilted back and my eyes fixed upon the little stage. From the dining-room I heard laughter, gay voices and the clatter of dishes; and at last two young footmen whom I hated, two tall young English footmen with powdered hair, threw open the great doors of white and gold, and the dinner party entered the ball-room noisily. They entered two by two, a procession gay and elegant and boisterous. My aunt seated herself behind me with Count Martelli. Jeremiah Ludlow hurried forward to secure the chair upon her other side. The concert began.

I remember nothing of the concert save the singing and dancing of Lillian Hender. Lillian Hender was dressed in red; her arms and neck were bare; and she wore shimmering stockings of red silk. How pretty she was! In a voice incredibly sweet she sang a gay little song, and between the stanzas of her song she

danced with an incredible light grace. Her skirt rose and fell like the petals of a flower, and back and forth and to and fro she swung and swayed and floated amid the music like a flower in a breeze. I adored her madly. I longed to marry her. And to my horror, at the end of her performance, she came and sat beside me. Her bosom heaved from her dance, and with parted lips she breathed unsteadily. Her knees were round and lustrous in their red silk stockings. Her skirt, spreading over her chair like a great rose, touched my hand. Out of the corner of my eye I gazed at her: I had not known that such beauty existed anywhere. Yet bashfulness, an overwhelming bashfulness, made me cold and stern, and I repulsed all her soft questions with a curt "Yes" or "No."

At breakfast the next morning, in the white breakfast-room with its airy outlook over terrace and lawns to the distant sea, we all served ourselves in the English fashion lately introduced by my father. Upon one sideboard were set forth cold squabs in aspic jelly, cold chickens and a cold ham, together with enormous peaches and pears, and bunches of enormous grapes. Upon another sideboard there steamed, above great silver warmers, silver platters of liver and bacon, truffled eggs, and devilled kidneys. No servants were present, and our guests moved from dish to dish, helping themselves. I thought it all great fun. So, too, did my father, who, out-Englishing the English, ate his entire breakfast standing.

Nearly everybody was in riding dress, for we purposed to ride to the beach, and, after a bath, to lunch in the open air beside the sea. It was a gay breakfast party. But Jeremiah Ludlow and Count Martelli made

themselves ridiculous by waiting too zealously upon my aunt. Now Jeremiah would take her plate to the side-board for a fresh portion of chicken and ham. Now Count Martelli would bear her cup to my mother for more coffee. The young men caused everybody to smile. Only my mother looked distressed, and once I heard her whisper to my father:

"He should be told."

"Told what? Who?" my father whispered back.

Now and then Count Martelli, twisting his moustache, would dart at Jeremiah Ludlow a swift, cold glance of annoyance. Jeremiah under this glance would redder and swell, and, standing stock still with my aunt's plate in his hand, he would frown upon his rival hideously. The count would then repress a slight, hateful smile and avert his eyes.

Below rather than above the middle height, Count Martelli was slender and supple. The clear pallor of his oval face, with its regular, delicate and manly features, was set off by thick, dark, glossy hair that flowed back in little waves from his brow. He had a certain easy grace of manner—a manner highly polished, yet free and natural. The count's manner, even when most ceremonious, even when he kissed my mother's hand, even when he drew his heels together and bowed to the ground, still retained this easy, free and natural grace.

As breakfast progressed, my aunt, dropping her neutral air, showed marked partiality towards Count Martelli. Her eyes dwelt on him passionately. She bent over him passionately. But to Ludlow she was cold and even rude.

Ludlow, however, fought doggedly on. He would not

accept defeat. "Go in and win," I heard a young broker murmur to him. And before the sideboard Jeremiah, as he heaped my aunt's plate high with grapes, gave the broker a grave, approving, confident nod.

After breakfast, in the cool, fresh air of the mid-summer morning, we set out seaward on horseback and in low phaetons of yellow basketwork. The white road wound beside the river, and now, a gay party, we skirted golden grain fields waving in the breeze, now we passed pine woods that exhaled in the sunshine their warm and spicy fragrance.

Jeremiah, who rode an Irish hunter, dashed off to leap a stone wall. He took the leap well. "Try it, count," he said, on his return.

And Count Martelli, smiling, also took the leap. He took it better than Jeremiah. He rode better than Jeremiah. His was the easy, supple seat of a cowboy. But Jeremiah rode with short stirrups and hunched body, awkwardly imitating a jockey.

The rich, chocolate-coloured soil became loose, pale and sandy. The road curved, and suddenly the sea's floor, blue and tremulous and immense, flashed upon our eyes. The mild air turned to a great and thrilling wind, a sea wind, salt, cold, intoxicating.

With a shout I urged on my pony. White dunes uprose in a glitter of sunshine. Coarse green grasses waved. Stately breakers, arching slowly, crashed on the beach. Sheets of snowy foam glided forward.

My aunt and her two suitors rode to the top of a dune. I followed them. As we gazed forth over the blue sea tumbling in the sunshine, my aunt's hat blew off, and was carried over the dune's face—an almost perpendicular descent of sand and reeds.

Count Martelli, with his gay, cold smile, pointed down that precipice to the hat upon the beach.

"Will you ride down after it?" he said to Jeremiah.

"Do you want me to break my neck?"

Count Martelli moved forward. "It is easy," he said, smiling back at Jeremiah. "You slide—like this."

And applying whip and spur suddenly, he gained the edge of the dune. The edge broke under his horse's weight; the horse reared, it stood erect; but the count struck it over neck and head, and in an avalanche of sand the animal slid upon its haunches down the steep incline. It lighted safely. Trembling, it regained its feet. Count Martelli, who had somehow secured the hat, displayed it gaily, as he wheeled round and laughed up at us.

"Come," he said, "all of you. Slide—so."

"Indeed we shan't!" cried my aunt. She added unsteadily, "Rosalino, you might—you might have killed yourself."

"*Pas de danger,*" he replied. "*On apprend ça à l'école militaire.*"

"What did he say?" Jeremiah muttered, as he and I followed my aunt down the dune's easier side.

"He said he learned the trick in the army," I answered.

Tents for bathing and for luncheon had been set up on the beach. I undressed quickly in my own little tent. I was the first to enter the water.

The cool water filled me with joy. I swam for a long time on my side, gazing up in a happy dream at the blue sky wherein lustrous white clouds floated. I turned shoreward. I flung myself on the top of a wave just as it broke, and in a hissing white turmoil of foam

I was borne swiftly and smoothly up the sands. Then I rose and began to stroll to and fro in the sunshine.

Little speckled crabs on my approach burrowed under the sand until only their hard, round eyes, like two pinheads, were visible; but, if I poked my finger at their eyes, their claws burst forth and struck up at me fiercely. Where the sand was drier, a host of pale grey crabs, a different species resembling spiders, scurried towards their round holes with captured flies. A wave washed up a clam. The clam put out a kind of long white tongue, a flexible spade, and, digging with passionate haste, it soon disappeared under the sand. But, as I turned away, a gull alighted. The gull dug up the clam, rose with it ten or twelve feet, dropped it to break its shell, and descending again, feasted greedily on its living flesh.

We lunched under a striped awning on the beach. How hungry we were! The luncheon consisted of hors d'œuvre, an omelette hongroise, little chops with new peas, ices, fruit, and coffee.

On towards the luncheon's end my father rose, a glass of champagne in his hand. While my father spoke, our butler hurried round the table, filling every glass with foaming wine.

"I desire to announce," my father said, "the betrothal of my sister and Count Martelli. I ask you to join me in drinking to their health and happiness."

There was great applause, everybody rose, and the health was drunk standing. Jeremiah Ludlow looked very sad, then he smiled bravely. He was the first to congratulate Count Martelli.

"Martelli," he said, "you deserve her. Make her happy. The best man has won."

There were tears in Jeremiah Ludlow's eyes.

"The best man has won," he repeated, and, turning to my aunt, he shook her by both hands vigorously.

My aunt smiled. Her smile was gentle and kind. But the bright, hard smile of Count Martelli expressed only his disgust.

Count Martelli could not understand Jeremiah's tearful American sentimentality. Those tears, those husky phrases, sickened the young foreigner. And they sickened me, too. Nevertheless I understood them, I even liked them—for they were generous. But there was nothing generous, nothing likeable, in the glittering and intolerant smile of the victorious count.

VIII

A DOZEN times in my childhood I had become horribly sick without learning to smoke. Why, then, at the age of twelve, tobacco having failed me, did I determine to try alcohol?

Alcohol, or, rather, drunkenness—for nothing short of drunkenness would content me—drunkenness was execrated by all respectable men and women. Yet I knew well there must be pleasure in it, or otherwise none would disgrace themselves, none would wallow in mire, for its sake. Yes, there must indeed be pleasure in it. What was this pleasure like?

And often I would follow thoughtfully Pointer and Swallow, the town drunkards, as they paraded the Main Street with hoarse song and extravagant gesture, a crowd of urchins at their heels. Or I would watch them basking, with the serenity of swine, in some foul gutter. But it was their arrest that most affected me—they were always being arrested—and on such occasions I would look on, with a kind of base thrill, as they struggled shamelessly, sobbing, wriggling through the mud, while in their captors' clutch their old and flimsy raiment tore and revealed, now here, now there, startling patches of white flesh.

Contemplating Pointer and Swallow, I would ask myself what kind of pleasure this could be for which men abandoned health, honour, decency, bread; for which, as for a religion, they sacrificed all!

And I would go over in my mind the pleasures I had myself enjoyed—the pleasure of sea bathing, the pleasure of reading. These were superb pleasures, but would I accept ruin and obloquy for them? No; never. Clearly, then, there must be in drunkenness a pleasure sweeter and profounder than I had ever known.

So, to plumb this pleasure, I resolved to get drunk.

For some months no opportunity to get drunk presented itself. Then, one April when my father and mother were visiting Jeremiah Ludlow at Lenox, the butler on his holiday left his keys in the pantry.

I saw the keys by chance, my resolve flashed up in my mind, and descending to the wine cellar, I selected, because they looked so old and rare, a bottle of Pontet Canet and a bottle of Château Yquem. I carried up to my study these musty-smelling bottles, thick-coated with dust and cobweb, and I hid them in a drawer of my bureau.

All the afternoon I was silent and grave, thinking of the strange experience that lay before me, and that evening, with a corkscrew in my hand and *Frankenstein* under my arm, I mounted to my rooms to begin my orgy.

My rooms were in the west wing—a study, a bed-chamber and bath. I locked the door, I uncorked both bottles and set them on my desk beside the reading-lamp, I seated myself in my desk chair; then, opening *Frankenstein*, I shivered deliciously.

It was in truth a great deed that lay before me. The boldness of it! From my chair I surveyed the spacious room, calm and silent in the lamplight—my globe upon the right, my blackboard on the left, and, running round all four walls, my low shelves of books—Hans Andersen, *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, Carlyle's German

fairy tales. And filling a glass with red wine, I asked myself if ever before a boy of twelve like me had embarked in this deliberate manner on so great a deed as getting drunk?

I had never tasted alcohol. Alcohol, for physiological rather than moral or religious reasons, was forbidden me. Hence it was with the liveliest expectations of delight that I raised to my lips the glass of clear, red, beautiful wine.

Faugh! The wine's odour, as it approached my nostrils, was disgusting, and still more disgusting its taste. I had expected, I suppose, something sweet, like an ice-cream soda; but this was bitter, horrible. One sip was enough, and all my hopes of a wonderful evening of drunkenness vanished.

I opened *Frankenstein* and began to read gloomily. The book was superb. With all my heart I sympathized with the young student searching in charnels, amid the corruption of cadavers, for life's forbidden secrets. But what a disappointment about the wine!

Perhaps, however, the white wine was less loathsome than the red. Hopefully I poured and sipped a little Château Yquem. Then I smiled.

Yes, the white wine was sweeter; it was almost endurable. It had, to be sure, a strong, heavy taste. Nevertheless I could stomach it, and I noted already the delicate and pleasant glow which it imparted to my body. Filling the glass, I leaned back comfortably and began to read and sip.

With each sip I enjoyed my *Frankenstein* the more. I sympathized alike with those deadly foes, the monster and the monster's creator; and, loving them both, I understood and forgave them both their irreconcilable

and murderous enmity. How sad, how unspeakably sad, the fate of each! How blameless each!

My glass emptied. I filled it again. For an hour I read and sipped. And my delight in my weird book, in my quiet and spacious room, and in my sense of physical well-being became so profound, so exquisite, that, at last, I could no longer sit still in my chair. I rose and paced the floor in a kind of joyous frenzy.

"Am I drunk?" I asked myself. "No, I am not drunk. But I am very happy."

For a long while I paced the floor. Then, tossing off another glass, I returned to my book. But the print was now a little difficult to read. Nevertheless, by frowning intently on the page, I overcame this difficulty.

A passage of peculiar horror thrilled me to the heart, and, rising again, I said:

"How happy I am!"

And I went out on to my balcony. The moon had risen, changing the night to silver. Upon the terrace every bush dreamed above its black shadow. The lawns were bathed in silver light. Above their black shadows the oaks, too, dreamed.

"How happy I am!" I repeated, laved in the silver beauty of the night; and in lurching back to my desk I knocked over a chair. "Am I drunk?" I muttered again. And I regarded myself in the mirror. But I did not look like Pointer or Swallow. I looked wild and feverish, a young madman with dishevelled hair and flaming eyes. I advanced towards the wine and fell. My head struck the floor with a loud crash. But I suffered no pain from the fall, and, lying on my back, I laughed lazily to think that such a hard fall should have entailed no pain. I sat up. Distant objects in

the room appeared double to me. Thus I saw, side by side, two clocks, two globes, two busts of Homer. But when I fixed my gaze intently on those double objects, they melted into one again forthwith. My heart beat with splendid strength: I vibrated to each beat like a machine: click, click, click: and it was odd, but not unpleasant, to note in head and body those steady, strong vibrations. Why, though, did I breathe so heavily? Each breath, like a snore, resounded through the room. Puzzled, amused, I lay down again. Drowsiness and laughter equally possessed me. "I can't get drunk," I chuckled, overcome with sleep.

I awoke—it was dawn—to a sense of inexplicable and overwhelming horror. The grey light, my books, the wine bottles and the glass upon my bureau—I recoiled from all in horror as from the corpses of friends I had murdered in the night. Closing my eyes, I slept again.

Once more I awoke. The grey dawn had changed to sunshine. I sat up, and a terrific pain stabbed my temples through and through. Very gently I let my head sink back upon the rug, and again I was vouchsafed the boon of sleep.

A third time I awoke, seized with an intolerable thirst. My whole being yearned for water. I rose, dazed and dizzy, entered my bedroom on uncertain feet, and drank glass after glass from the jug.

And now I was conscious of the terrible derangement of my stomach. I was sick, sick as I had never been. My stomach heaved and tossed like a storm-swept sea.

But I must undress. With dismal groans I sat on the bedside and took off my raiment, very slowly, piece by piece. Then, with a great sigh, I lay down.

I had not the least idea that my sickness, my thirst

and my profound nervous depression were due to alcohol. Some dreadful malady, meningitis or typhoid, I thought, had seized me, and I was doomed to lie bedridden for three or four months—perhaps I was doomed to die.

No matter, if I could only sleep.

I drew the coverlet up to my chin. I closed my eyes wearily. Ah, to sleep—sleep—blessed sleep—

But my splitting head—my heaving, writhing stomach—

No sleep, alas, for me!

IX

U P to the age of fourteen I was deemed a good boy. I was cited as a model of scholarship and probity. Nor is this, after all, strange. For my various escapades—my smoking and drinking and what-not—besides remaining undiscovered as a rule, were but brief interludes amid long years of conscientious study.

To the world of adults, then, that is the picture I presented—a quiet, grave boy, a boy to be respected, always diligent, always upright, always first in his classes.

And to my playmates I presented a like picture; and they, too, respected me, though not so much for my probity and scholarship as for my courage—yes, my courage—for, with an hypocrisy of which I cannot be proud, I hid my cowardice, I took my share of fighting, rough games and perilous climbs, and thus I dearly earned at my playmates' hands that respect without which my life amongst them would have been a hell.

But my childhood was not happy. No child roysterer I, for all my escapades—no child roysterer, swaggering about with Turkish Patrols in my pockets and devil-may-care oaths upon my lips—but rather a child silent and sad under his heavy load of responsibilities.

Responsibilities! There were my responsibilities to my teachers, whose respect I must maintain by mastering daily the most tedious subjects—the dates of battles, the boundaries of states. There were my responsibilities to my playmates, with whom, lest I be proved

a coward, I must now fight, now climb a perilous tree, now scale some dizzy cliff. And before me, like wild beasts in my path, I always saw the examinations that lay inexorably in wait—those dreadful annual examinations for fear of which not a single fact of my whole life's studies from the beginning must ever be forgotten.

I often longed in my childhood to become a man. A man's life seemed to me care-free and joyous beside the harassed life of a child. A man was not called upon at any moment, under pain of unendurable obloquy, to prove his valour by fighting some formidable ruffian, some Jimmy Sheridan or Tommy Rowe. A man's evenings were his own: he gave them over to novels and plays; but a child's were devoted to the memorizing of the most difficult and the most uninteresting lessons. Nor must a man, appearing every morning before a merciless superior, prove beyond cavil that he was advancing day by day in knowledge.

The joys of my childhood were reading and bathing.

Hans Andersen was the writer I loved best to read, and his tale of *The Mud King's Daughter* I loved above all other tales. The wild morass, Jutland, the friendly storks, Helga, the Christian priest—I saw and felt it all, even as Hans Andersen saw and felt it. “The wild morass”: it was the story's motive, a piece of pure music: music savage, sad and desolate that, continually recurring, continually brought up before the mind the savage, sad and desolate scene. “*The wild morass*”—this phase remains for me the symbol of literary beauty.

The joy of bathing! The joy of the white, glittering, windy sea-beach! The joy of swimming on my side in the clear water, gazing up the while, in a kind of dream, at the blue sky, with its white clouds—the blue

sky so vast, so pure—the white clouds so cool and fresh, like drifts of snow.

And love came and went in my sober child life. Mine was always an unspoken love, a love that demanded nothing. In a kind of amorous swoon I would lie alone for hours in woodland or bedroom. Now and then, sitting up, I would write the beloved's name. This gave me exquisite pleasure. Anon I would murmur dreamily the name I had written, and thrills of bliss would dart through my being. But a sudden thought would strike me, a thought, perhaps, of food, and, rising briskly, I would hurry from my retreat with vigorous strides, my love already dead, already forgotten.

Thus I reached the age of fourteen, a good boy in the eyes of every one.

And why was I deemed a good boy?

I was deemed a good boy because I accepted all the conventions, or because, at least, when I rebelled against them—when I rebelled against adult conventions by getting drunk, or when I rebelled against juvenile conventions by shirking a fight—my rebellion was so unobtrusively conducted that no one ever noticed it.

But a time would come—

BOOK II

I

AT the age of twelve, abandoning Banakerburg's public school, I entered Peabody Academy. Here I would prepare for college.

Tommy Rowe and the Farplug brothers had assured me that the Peabody Academy boys would seem "sissies" after the robust, manly lads of Banakerburg; and, as I drove to the new school the first day of the term, I heartily hoped that my friends' prophecy would come true.

Ah, how fine it would be, I thought—yet at the thought I smiled incredulously—how fine it would be if I, so insignificant a figure hitherto, should now, beside the timid weaklings of Peabody, stand magically forth a leader, swift and bold and strong.

I remember well the grey, hot morning in late September, 1885, when I first entered the school-yard of Peabody. One glance was enough, and my hopes of leadership all vanished. These boys, save for the splendour of their raiment, were exactly like the Banakerburg boys; and here, as at Banakerburg, I was doomed to my wonted insignificance. Shrinking into the wall, I began to study my surroundings warily.

The school-yard, a flat rectangle of livid grey, a grey like putty, sweltered in livid grey light. A high fence

of grey boards surrounded it, and it was floored with grey gravel that resembled putty crumblings. This flat, rectangular school-yard had nothing, not a tree, not a grass blade, not a path, to break its ugly, flat monotony of grey.

And in it two hundred boys either pursued one another with fierce yells, or conversed in corners in polite groups, or kicked a football, or tossed baseballs. Over-crowded, the boys collided now and then, felling one another on the hard grey gravel heavily. Even the polite conversationalists were continually being felled thus. A boy would burst through them like a bomb-shell, he would hurl them headlong this way and that. But they took these falls as a matter of course. With tolerant smiles they would rise hurriedly, brush their clothes with their palms, and resume their polite conversations as if nothing had happened.

Shrunk into the wall, I humbly admired the elegance, strength and agility displayed on every side. Above all I was impressed by Alfred Earle.

Alfred Earle, a thickset boy, wore a bright, fresh Norfolk suit of yellow and black plaid. High collars being fashionable in 1885, Alfred's collar thrust his chin up and back like a blow. Short, tight knicker-bockers being fashionable, Alfred's knickerbockers ended two inches above the knee, while they fitted, literally, like the skin. "Bangs" being fashionable, Alfred's bang of coarse, dark hair descended to his eyebrows.

Alfred Earle caught to the pitching of Eddie Hillman, head boy of the school. He caught beautifully. He handled Eddie's swiftest in-shoots with a kind of languid scorn. Now and then, the day being hot and

humid, he passed a small white handkerchief daintily over his big red face.

As Alfred Earle delighted, so Jimmy Sheridan horrified me. Jimmy Sheridan kept trotting gaily about, now twisting this boy's arm, now pulling that one's hair. He left in his wake rage and sorrow, hatred and tears. For he was that strange anomaly, a bully. It amused him to inflict pain, mental and physical pain.

He was an agile lad, with a snub, pert nose and pale and vacant eyes. As he ran by me, pursuing an urchin of the lower school, he laughed. There was something unnatural in his vacant, thoughtless laughter.

He soon overtook his quarry. Gripping from the rear the little fellow's wrist, he twisted it back and up, back and up, towards the nape of the neck. His victim bent forward, shouting for pain. Those shouts of pain were at first polite, agreeable and perfunctory; but, as Jimmy kept twisting, they became indignant. Now they became angry. And now, alas, they became a roar, an uncontrollable roar, of agony and woe.

Jimmy Sheridan in the midst of that roar laughed his vacant laugh, while his pale eyes glanced here and there, vacant as the eyes of a doll. He dropped the little boy's wrist, gave him a contemptuous push, a contemptuous kick, and sauntered away. "Cry-baby," I heard him mutter, as if to himself, and his lip curled in scorn. The next moment, halting before an elegant Jew, he began to leap up and down and to chant:

"Sheeny vid a vax nose!
Sheeny vid a vax nose!"

To escape Jimmy Sheridan I stole into the lavatory. The lavatory walls, here as at Banakerburg, were cov-

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ered with obscene drawings, and as I studied them a friendly hand gripped my shoulder, a friendly voice asked my name, and I looked up into the thin, aristocratic face of Doctor Laud, the Latin master.

"My name is Banaker, sir," I piped.

"Son of George Banaker of Banaker House," said Doctor Laud humorously, "grandson of old Brian Banaker, the hero of Bull Run, great-grandson of Bishop John Bunyan Banaker——"

"John Bunyan Banaker was my great-great uncle," I interrupted.

Doctor Laud laughed, and yet, despite his laughter, I saw that he respected me for my ancestry. This puzzled me. Nevertheless I liked him, with his well-cut clothes, his distinguished air, and thin, brown, aristocratic face.

At Peabody, as at Banakerburg, I got on well with my studies: without any difficulty I stood at the head of my class: and at Peabody as at Banakerburg I kept out of athletics altogether. Not for me those crashing tackles, nor for me those headlong falls on the frozen mud of football fields in the sad light of waning November afternoons. For me, upon such cold and strenuous occasions, for me, so thin and frail, an armchair by the fire and the golden enchantment of a book.

Unknown without my form, within it I was popular enough. Everybody within it liked me but Jimmy Sheridan, and I liked everybody but Jimmy, and him I hated and feared.

I hated, I feared, I studied him. Surely there must be some point of sympathy between us? But no. The boy seemed to care for nothing. He seemed to have neither friend nor enemy. Laughing vacantly, with his

vacant, pale eyes, his downy hair, his pert, upturned nose and agile strength, he seemed to devote his whole life to the infliction of pain.

In his studies he always failed, but this did not embarrass him. He would resume his seat, after the most hopeless failure, with an air of perfect serenity and cheerfulness.

He called me "Skinny" and "Phantom." Now and then he twisted my arm, kicked me, pulled my hair. Like all his victims, I would resist his tortures gently, with a vast show of polite good humour, pretending that I rather enjoyed his kicks and thumps.

But how I longed to fight him! Often, lying awake in the dark, I dreamed I had him in my power. Burning with hatred and rage, I rained great blows upon his face. For once his vacant, pert look changed to a look of pain and fear.

We fought at last.

We sat, a dozen of us, in Doctor Laud's room awaiting the beginning of the Latin period, while Sheridan danced before Muller and chanted:

"Sheeny vid a vax nose!
Sheeny vid a vax nose!"

He was always doing this. He never tired of it. Day after day, week after week, with a vacant smile, in a voice silly, vacant and cruel beyond belief, he chanted his eternal screed; while always, as now, Muller bent gravely over his book, pretending that he neither heard nor saw.

"Sheeny, Sheeny, Sheeny!" Sheridan sang; and then angered by Muller's immobility, he seized the lad's nose and tweaked it.

Everybody laughed. Yes, Alfred Earle, Billy Wilkins, the school's bravest and most splendid athletes, broke into loud, coarse laughter.

"Don't, Jimmy!" I heard Muller whisper. And I saw a deep flush spread over his pale face. I saw tears well up in his dark eyes. "Don't, Jimmy, don't!"

"Sheeny vid a vax nose!"

The silly song became louder, crueler. And now Sheridan, besides tweaking Muller's nose, pulled his hair as well. Roars of laughter resounded upon every side.

Suddenly Muller pushed Sheridan away, burst like a girl into a paroxysm of weeping, folded his arms on the desk before him, and buried his face in his folded arms in an attitude of despair, an attitude of utter grief, utter humiliation and shame.

Roars and guffaws of mirth. And something blazed up within me, something compelled me to rise and shout.

"Sheridan, God damn you! You bastard! You——"

I poured on him all the foulest oaths and curses I had ever heard in the Lower End. Then I paused, terror-stricken. What had I done?

Jimmy, scowling, advanced. He was carrying his Ovid, my hand lay on my desk, and, as he said truculently, "What's the matter with you?" he banged the edge of the book down like a hammer on my fingers.

The pain re-lit my rage. I leapt upon him, I seized him by the throat, and, bending him back over a desk, I struck him again and again on the nose, on the mouth.

But my rage soon died. My blows soon lost their force. Sheridan, struggling violently, wrenched himself free.

And then, to my vast relief, there came a soft scurry—"Here's Doctor Laud"—and Alfred Earle thrust me into my seat. The doctor entered briskly. He regarded us with a strange smile. His intelligent eyes rested a moment on Jimmy Sheridan, who, with bowed head, staunched stealthily his bleeding nose. They rested on Muller's face bleared with tears. They rested on me.

"Wilkins!" said Doctor Laud; and Billy Wilkins' faultless recitation began.

At the end of the lesson I was congratulated on my valour by all the athletes of my form. But there was more amusement than respect in their congratulations. It was as if they congratulated the sudden valour of a sheep.

But I knew I was not yet done with Sheridan, and after school, sure enough, the boy waylaid me with a fierce and noisy crew of partisans.

"I'll show you," he said.

"What will you show me?"

"I'll show you," repeated Sheridan. "I had no chance this morning. It wasn't fair."

"Ah, go to hell."

The wild crew, as we wrangled, pushed and jostled us. With ferocious and taunting cries they steered us into the seclusion of Juniper Alley. We both laid down our books.

"Get started now!" an impatient voice roared suddenly.

I drew off my overcoat, I handed my hat to Gilbert Allen.

"Hold this, will you?" I said, in dismal tones.

I was terrified; but, none the less, I would fight. For I remembered the Banakerburg monitorship and

my retreat towards the bakery in a rain of shame and woe; I remembered my self-questioner, a horrible self-questioning still continued in the night hours—"Would I have halted? Or would I have kept on past the bakery, a coward?"—and here at last was my chance, at the mere cost of a black eye or a bloody nose, my chance to answer that self-questioning once for all, to answer it in the right way, to wash from my soul for ever its corroding stain.

A wild frenzy seized me. I was transported with joy.

"Come on!" I shouted. "I'll show you, you damned skunk of a bully!"

Sheridan struck at my head. Dodging the blow, I landed a light left on his nose. And his nose, instantly, began to bleed afresh. The whole lower part of his face became crimson.

"Hurrah! Go it, Banny! Another on the nose!"

We moved warily about each other. But Sheridan's wariness was so excessive that it filled me with confidence and strength. His bleeding nose made him snuffle. He drew his hand across it in a hurried and humble way, smearing the blood over his check. I feinted, and he leapt back a yard. Again I feinted, and again he leapt back.

"Bah! Baby!" yelled a voice.

I struck at his head. He ducked, his arm swung like a flail, a terrific blow on the ear dazed me, and, as in a dream, I heard a roar of delight. Our audience was cruelly impartial. Whether it was Sheridan or I who received some crashing, staggering blow, a roar of equal joy went up.

On and on we fought. Applause, now friendly and stimulating, now inimical and crushing, rang continu-

ally in my ears. I breathed with difficulty. My blows, I well knew, began to lack force. Life seemed a nightmare of endless and vain struggle. Would this abominable fight never end?

Sheridan's fist crashed on my face, and the world turned to grey cloud. Somewhere beyond this grey cloud rose roar on roar of joy. Bang! Another blow in the face, and I spat out a little piece of tooth. But I felt no pain.

The grey cloud lifted. I saw Sheridan, flourishing his fists, advance. And suddenly I remembered Banakergburg and Tommy Rowe again, and I feinted at Sheridan's head as Tommy had feinted at mine. Sheridan raised his guard, and I gathered up all my remaining strength, and struck him full and hard on the unprotected stomach.

Hurrah! He doubled up as I had done; he folded his hands upon his stomach as I had done; and, whilst he emitted strange, uncouth, deaf-mute noises just as I had done, he gazed helplessly up at me towering over him with clenched fists.

"Give in!" I said.

Crouched low, his hands upon his stomach, he nodded a humble assent. Yes, he gave in. He yielded.

I turned away. Gilbert Allen handed me my hat. "Splendid, Brian!" he whispered. "But wipe your lip—it's bloody. Is that tooth broken?"

Jimmy Sheridan, having recovered his breath, smiled imperturbably under a volley of jeers. This failure in battle, it was plain, troubled him no more than a failure in recitation. Rearing above his tormentors, his face, streaked with blood, resembled the painted, dauntless face of a Red Indian.

II

FRENCH I spoke and wrote, thanks to Madeleine Colette, like English; but Latin and Greek I found a puzzle, an irritating puzzle. It seemed to me that Virgil and Homer, after having written a straightforward, intelligible sentence, then took the words of that sentence like toy blocks and mixed them into a hopeless jumble of nonsense. In this jumble the subject would be concealed behind instead of before its verb, the object would be buried in a thicket of gibberish, and all the adjectives would be carted away and hidden miles and miles from their nouns.

Such conduct on the part of Virgil and Homer was puerile and unfair. Therefore, without any sense of wrongdoing, I used secretly at Peabody interlinear translations. These interlinear translations enabled me in fifteen minutes to master tasks that would otherwise have cost hours of vexatious toil.

Interlinears led to other things. Soon I had accumulated an "answers" to my algebra, a "key" to my Latin prose, a "teacher's aid" to my geometry, etc.

Working with these unlawful tools, I was obliged, of course, to work in secret. So I rose at dawn, lit my lamp, locked my door and prepared my lessons for the day in silence, fear and haste. At my forbidden task, among my keys and aids, I resembled those medieval alchemists who, among crucibles and alembics, sought

fearfully and hurriedly the philosopher's stone and other secrets interdicted under pain of death.

My father had liked to drop in upon me at my studies of an evening. He had liked to conquer an algebraic problem, to disentangle the hopeless confusion of a long Greek clause; but naturally, when I began to work with keys and aids and interlinears, I could not have my father hanging about, and hence the change from evening to morning study.

This change filled my beautiful mother with pity and pride. She boasted of it to her friends. My father, though, regarded it with doubt. "Why?" he asked. "Why?" And when I declared faintly that my mind was fresher in the morning, he frowned in perplexed fashion, and his honest eyes searched mine, trying to read my soul.

So four months passed. And then, on my return from Peabody one tragic winter afternoon, my mother rushed upon me in a wild rage.

"You young dog!"

"Well, what's the matter now?"

With a swish of silken draperies my mother ran down the great curve of the marble stair, she strode across the marble hall, she seized my thin shoulder.

"What's the matter now?" I snarled, and, jerking my shoulder loose from my mother's strong grasp, I took shelter behind a huge table of marble and gilt.

We glared at each other across the table in silence. Hatred blazed in our eyes. My mother cried:

"And I boasted everywhere of your morning study, fool that I was! Oh, if I had a horsewhip——"

But a footman entered.

"Mr. Brian, your father wishes to see you in the library, sir."

"Have they been ransacking my room, Jones?" I whispered.

Jones, after a glance at my mother's back, nodded.

I ascended slowly the sweeping and shallow curve of the marble stair. I leaned heavily on the balustrade of carven bronze. At each landing I rested. But at last, smothering a sigh, I had to enter the library.

My father sat at the sumptuous Louis Quinze bureau whereat I had so often, in the past, seen my grandfather, mountainous and white-bearded, tranquilly seated with his war papers. My father, however, was surrounded, not with war papers, but with interlinears and keys and blank reports. My father gazed out, like my grandfather, upon the landscape rolling southward to the sea; but his face did not wear the calm and happy look of the dead old man's face. It wore, above that mound of damning documents, a look of profound grief.

"Brian!" His voice was gentle and sad. His eyes looked into mine with unutterable reproach.

"Brian, I wouldn't have believed it of you."

"It's not," I muttered, "as bad as you think."

For an instant he seemed relieved, then despair settled over him again. But in his gentle voice, his reasonable and patient voice, he said:

"It's not as bad as I think? What do you mean by that?"

"I mean," I answered, "that, even if I do use interlinears and such things, I get my lessons thoroughly. I learn the constructions. I stand at the head of my class."

"But why do you use them?"

"Because it takes too long to get my lessons without them."

"Yet the other boys——"

"The other boys all use them, too. All, at least, but Billy Wilkins."

"It's not just to Billy Wilkins, then."

I made no answer. In truth it was not just to Billy Wilkins. My father sighed and said:

"So this is why you study in the early morning! Well, Brian! What has befallen you? You've always been such a good boy, so honest and upright. We've always been so proud of you, your mother and I."

My father's generous words filled me with shame. Turning hurriedly to the window, I looked forth over the white, desolate, snow-covered expanse of terrace and lawns. Hypocrite that I was, what would my father say if he knew that I smoked, that I played truant, that I stole, that I had even once got drunk? Hypocrite that I was!

"And these blank reports," said my father, "what do these blank reports mean?"

"They don't belong to me. I'm keeping them for a friend." Thus amid my penitence and remorse must I lie on.

My father sighed. Uneasily his honest eyes searched mine.

"Well," he said at last, "you shouldn't use cribs. It isn't fair. I'm going to destroy them all, burn them all up." And now my father's brow cleared, and he spoke cheerily, heartily, affectionately. "Promise me not to buy more!"

"I promise. But," I added, "if I can't get my lessons without them, then I'll buy more."

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"Oh," cried my father, "you can get your lessons without them if ever boy could!"

But I said doubtfully:

"I don't know about that. When it comes to eighty lines of Virgil a day—"

"You can do it! You can do it!"

But I shook my head doubtfully.



III

AFTER the destruction of my interlinears and keys, I bought new ones, confiding them, for safety's sake, to Alfred Earle. An unwise course.

For Alfred used them as if they were his own. He mutilated them. He loaned them to his friends.

"Earle," I would say, "I need the *Anabasis* this morning in the ten o'clock study period."

"Well, you can't have it."

"Can't have it! Why not?"

"Because Allen's got it."

"My God, Earle, haven't I told you repeatedly never to lend these cribs of mine without permission?"

But with a light laugh, as if my rage merely amused him, Alfred Earle would walk away.

Sick at last of his tyranny, I cried:

"Give my cribs back to me! Give them all back. I don't care whether my father finds me out again or not."

"Give them back, eh?"

"Yes."

"Well, I don't know about that."

"What!" I was shocked.

"I don't know about that," repeated Alfred Earle. Then he added stoutly, "You gave them to me to keep for you till the end of the year. Well, by jingo, I'm going to keep them!"

I glared at him. But nothing could be done. He was nearly twice my size; he could have licked me, as we used to say, with one hand tied behind his back. No, nothing could be done. And I turned and walked away in silence, longing for his death.

In the preparation of my Greek a day or two later, I discovered that the interlinear Xenophon contained an entire paragraph that was absent from the school Xenophon itself.

"Oh," I thought, "if only Earle would be called up on this paragraph!"

For Earle, in his incredible laziness, never gave his Greek a moment's study. When bidden to construe, he construed direct from the interlinear page, which was cut out and fastened in his book. If, then, he should be called up at the right moment to-day, he would unwittingly construe before his mystified teacher an entire paragraph that, so to speak, was not there.

"Of course it can't happen," I mused. "I couldn't have such luck."

Nevertheless, in returning the interlinear to Alfred Earle, I told him nothing of the strange superfluous paragraph.

And on this paragraph, to my indescribable joy, an hour later he was called up.

"Enteuthen (thence) exelaunei (he marches)——"

Thus Alfred Earle began calmly to construe the paragraph that was not there.

"Where are you reading, Earle? At the bottom of the page?"

"Yes, sir."

"Go on, then."

Frightened, mystified, Alfred went on very slowly:—

"exelaunei (he marches) parasaggas (parasangs)——"

"Really, Earle!" Old Doctor Dobbins, with a bewildered air, passed his hand over his brow. "Are you reading at the bottom of page eighty-six?"

"Yes, sir." Alfred's voice, faint with terror, seemed to come, muffled, from a great way off. He cast at his class-mates a look of inquiry and supplication. "What is wrong?" this look cried piteously. "What is wrong? Help me!"

"Go on, Earle."

—"exelaunei (he marches) parasaggas (parasangs) deka (ten)——"

Though he went on very slowly, though he stumbled and stammered purposely, though he assumed, as a shield against the unknown evil threatening him, an air of hopeless idiocy, still, for all that, he continued to read and to translate a paragraph that was not in his book.

"Earle, bring me your Xenophon."

Alfred Earle, quickly tossing the interlinear page behind him to the floor, advanced with a terror-stricken look.

"Where were you reading? Here?"

"Er—yes, sir." He tried to make the answer non-committal.

"Then your text must be different from mine." Doctor Dobbins brightened with interest. "Show me exactly where you were reading."

"There, sir." Alfred made a vague and idiotic gesture towards the page, a gesture indicating nothing.

"Here!"

"Er—yes, sir."

"But, Earle, this text is just like mine. This isn't what you were reading."

"Yes, sir." No voice, no air, could have been more idiotic than Alfred's.

Doctor Dobbins removed his gold-rimmed spectacles. Bending forward over his desk, he rubbed his aged eyes with his aged hands. He mused a moment. He looked tired, bewildered and discouraged.

"Really, Earle—I don't understand—"

"Maybe I lost the place, sir." Alfred's voice was now hopeful, courageous. He saw that with his simulated idiocy he had worn down the good old doctor. Catching Jimmy Sheridan's pale glance, he even winked.

"Very well, Earle. That will do."

Alfred, his back to the doctor, strode towards his seat, making, to amuse his class-mates, hideous grimaces of victory and joy. But as he passed my bench he kicked me viciously on the ankle. Then, from his seat, he shook his fist. It was plain that he thought I had betrayed him.

And at the hour's end he came and towered over me truculently. "I'll see you after school, Banaker."

My heart sank. Must I, then, fight this huge ruffian? But, dissembling my fear, I snarled up into his face, "Ah, go to hell!"

Our class-mates gathered round us. "What's the matter?" they asked. "What's wrong?"

"Why," said Alfred, almost exploding with virtuous indignation, "there's a paragraph in the crib that isn't in the Xenophon—and Banaker never told me!"

"Is the paragraph off colour?" That was our class-mates' first thought, and they bent over the paragraph eagerly. But it was not off colour, and with disap-

pointed looks they turned to Alfred Earle again. "What's that about Banaker?" they said. "Banaker never told me. And so I translated this whole paragraph that wasn't in the book. You saw what a close shave I had. Why, I might have been ruined."

They bent upon me now an expectant gaze that said, "Here's a serious charge, a charge of betrayal. What have you to answer?"

I was tempted to lie in answer, to say I had not noticed the mysterious paragraph; for well I knew that in the eyes of these conventional young moralists a betrayal was a betrayal, and nothing could excuse it. Nevertheless I did not lie. Too proud, or, rather, too angry to lie, I said with a sneer:

"Why should I help Earle? Earle is no friend of mine."

"No friend! Me—no friend!" Alfred seemed stricken to the heart. But he mastered his emotion quickly. "I'll see you after school," he growled.

"Go to hell," I muttered, in a weak, forlorn voice. For my class-mates were all shaking their heads sadly at me, as at a Judas; and, in addition to this Judas stigma, I must take as well the stigma of a beating after school. It was too much.

But suddenly from the background big John Murray strode forward.

"Earle," he said, with a cold and mocking smile, "if you see Banaker after school to-day, you'll see me after school to-morrow."

Alfred Earle gave a great start. "What for, John? Why so?" he asked, with an air of affectionate reproach.

"Never mind," said big John Murray, and, retiring

afresh into the background, he began to munch a fried-oyster sandwich.

Alfred turned to me. "Why didn't you tell me about that paragraph?" he said, in a milder voice.

And lo, another champion took up my cause.

"I know why he didn't tell you," cried Gilbert Allen. "You know why, too, Earley. It was to get even for the way you treat his cribs."

"A small way to get even," said a voice.

Turning quickly, I scanned those clustered faces. Billy Wilkins smiled—an amused, superior smile, the meaning whereof I could not read. The others frowned, nodded doubtfully, seemed inclined to agree that I had indeed got even in a small way. But Gilbert Allen cried again:

"What was he to do? He's no coward—he licked Sheridan. But he couldn't fight Earle any more than Earle could fight John here. Well, then, what was he to do?"

"That's right," said big John Murray, looking up with approbation from his fried-oyster sandwich.

"Something in that."

"Yes, that's right."

Thus spoke various voices. Public opinion was swinging round. As for Alfred Earle, he looked very sheepish. And now, suddenly, I advanced upon him.

"Damn you, give me back my cribs!" I thundered. "You've got no right to keep them."

"Yes, give back his cribs," said big John.

"Give them back," said the crowd.

"Very well. I'll give them back to-morrow," hastily mumbled Alfred Earle.

Such a crestfallen figure I had never beheld. The

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force of public opinion! Here was Alfred Earle, the brave, indomitable Alfred Earle, bowing before public opinion with all the servile and shameless alacrity of a statesman. The ugly spectacle filled my heart with pity.

"Oh," I said, "you needn't bring them back—only don't lend them any more."

"All right," he mumbled.

IV

FOR examinations big John Murray preferred a crib that rolled, after the manner of an ancient Latin manuscript, upon two tiny sticks. This crib, though small enough to fit in the waistcoat pocket, contained a strip of paper a foot long, a strip of paper filled on both sides with the finest writing. Big John manipulated his crib very deftly with the thumb and forefinger of one hand. Like a cigarette maker he twirled it back and forth with perfect ease on its two tiny sticks. A difficult crib to operate, but big John Murray had mastered all its difficulties well.

Jimmy Sheridan's crib was his cuff, on which he would pencil, in lines fainter than mist or gossamer, all manner of information. This information may have been ill-chosen, or again it may have been erroneous: at any rate, Jimmy, despite it, failed as a rule in his examinations.

Of all our cribs Alfred Earle's were the most elaborate, the most cumbersome, and the most audacious. In every pocket Alfred would carry sheaves of loose pages filled with important facts. Dates, pencilled on boot and finger-nail, would be visible, in certain lights, to him alone. Memorandum books were hidden here and there about his person. He even smuggled bulky volumes into the examination chamber—smuggled them in, usually, in the seat of his trousers. Yet, for all his cribs, Alfred, like Jimmy, failed as a rule.

The only boy in our form who would not use a crib was Billy Wilkins.

Billy Wilkins!—I can give his essence best by saying that it embarrassed me to be alone with him as much as it embarrassed me to be alone with a clergyman.

I deemed him handsome. He had dark eyes, sleek, dark hair parted in the middle, and features regular, delicate and strong. His shoulders were broader, his legs thinner, than the average. He was rich and, of course, aristocratic (a descendant, in fact, of the Dukes of Medina Sidonia); he dressed well; and he wore a pince-nez with a black cord passing behind his left ear. I can see him now, with a graceful, elegant and unconscious gesture, arranging that black cord, or adjusting the pince-nez on the bridge of his straight nose with long, white, strong fingers.

In the gymnasium he could do the giant swing, the flying dip, and other feats only possible to muscular and harmonious frames. But he took no part in athletics. He never played football or baseball. He never ran or jumped in our school sports.

I visited him now and then. He lived in a kind of grey château upon a hill. The château looked down on the town of Wawa, a vile town clustered round the Wilkins iron works. His father, who owned the iron works, was, like Billy himself, broad-shouldered and thin-legged, a man of elegant and distinguished aspect, with a short beard that rippled away to right and left from a central parting.

The grey château within, spacious and still and cold, reminded me of a church. The meals that I ate there seem in retrospect as solemn as the Lord's supper. With their white head-dresses, black gowns and lowered lids,

the young, pale, silent maids, gravely proffering silver tureens, resembled nuns.

And the Wilkinses themselves were like a group of divines. Of course there was nothing of clamminess or cant about them. They were, on the contrary, an extremely wholesome family.

Once, on Billy's return from Europe, I tried to get him to describe Paris. But he could tell me nothing of Paris save that the streets were very slippery, and from the hotel windows he used to watch the horses falling on rainy days. An echo, this, no doubt, of the old English lie about the cruelty of the French towards animals.

Conquered by the divine spring weather, Gilbert Allen, Alfred Earle and I "bagged it," one April, for a week.

The first day of our bagging it, we met in the black, subterranean waiting-room of John's department store. How we chuckled! It was nine o'clock, and our schoolmates—Billy Wilkins and big John Murray and the rest—were now filing gloomily into chapel, a day of long and irksome toil before them. But before us lay a day, a week, of freedom, rest and joy.

"Isn't it grand?" said Alfred Earle. "Banaker, give me a Turkish Patrol."

In our happiness, as we sallied forth from John's we laughed, shouted, and knocked one another about. An elderly curmudgeon swore at me for treading on his feet. But what cared I? The weather was divine. Through a silver haze the April sunshine glittered mildly. My Turkish Patrol had never smoked so well.

We happened on the Mercantile Library, seated ourselves on the grey library steps until our cigarettes were

finished, then entered in. Ah, the books' good, musty smell! The serene quietude of the great blue hall! Fastidiously we went from shelf to shelf, and soon we had accumulated armloads of masterpieces.

Above there was a balustraded gallery. Ascending to it, we found it was divided by shelves of medical works into little rooms. Each little room had its own table and its own half-dozen chairs. What seclusion! What coziness! Selecting a little room, we plunged into a silent orgy of reading.

I never enjoyed a morning more. My only trouble was that, with so many masterpieces before me, I could not become absorbed in any single one. I went restlessly from *Tom Sawyer* to *King Solomon's Mines*, from *Treasure Island* to *The Frozen Pirate*.

At noon Alfred Earle issued forth and bought from a street vendor fifteen cents' worth of doughnuts and pretzels in three great bags. We lunched at our table amid our stacks of books.

In the afternoon Gilbert Allen introduced us to Fielding and Smollett, Congreve and Wycherley; and he was bringing the *Decameron* up to us when an official sternly wrested the volume from his hand.

The second day of our bagging it we fished on Staten Island. It took us an hour or more to find a pond. Then from ten till three, we lay under a willow on the damp pond bank, our floats bobbed on the sun-lit water, and with one eye on our floats we smoked and talked and ate. Our catch was a catfish.

The third day we devoted to shoplifting. We went from department store to department store, stealing toothbrushes, soap, pins, wallets, thermometers. We stole, in a kind of joyous delirium, four or five dollars'

worth of goods. What fun I found it to loiter before a counter, pricing this and that, and then, when the attendant's back was turned, to slip into my pocket penknife or brooch, and saunter slowly, carelessly away, trembling deliciously in the fear that my theft had been seen, that swift feet were stealing up behind me, that an upraised hand was about to fall heavily, fatally on my shoulder.

The fourth and fifth days passed, like the first, in our little cozy room in the gallery of the Mercantile Library.

And now our week was over, and it only remained to cover up our tracks. About this there was no difficulty.

I possessed three blank reports purchased from a printer's boy. Forging the signatures to our real reports, we got Lewis, who wrote a beautiful hand, to fill out the blank ones for presentation to our parents.

With glad smiles our parents signed those false reports, which registered, of course, a week of unusual scholastic success on our part.

My week of bagging it caused me no compunction. Only when my father gloated over my false report's excellence, only when I looked down into his face, beaming with delight, as he perused the lying thing, did I feel any twinge of conscience. Then, for a moment, I confess, I felt ashamed of myself. I felt a great love and a great pity for my father, duped so easily and so completely.

* * * * *

My father, as the years bore me from childhood to adolescence, grew richer and richer. He continually sold New York land at fabulous prices. He continually bought this stock and that under the guidance of Jere-

miah Ludlow. Banaker House became grander; our entertainments became more sumptuous; our staff of foreign servants became more numerous and more impudent.

Sometimes, in the summer, we went abroad. I did not like it over there. Castello Martelli, my aunt's residence in Tuscany, alone pleased me. Its grey towers crowned a grey crag.

My father liked the state maintained at Castello Martelli. Of the servants' three liveries—their morning, their evening, and their full-dress liveries—the last particularly impressed him, with its cloth-of-gold sash which slanted across the bosom and ended in a splendid knot on the left hip. My father resolved to introduce this sash at Banaker House.

But he was dubious about the gay and beautiful Emilia, with whom, inasmuch as she was his second cousin, the count went riding every afternoon.

My aunt had grown sallow and listless since the birth of her two little boys. She sometimes questioned us about Jeremiah Ludlow wistfully.

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At the age of fifteen I began to long for a beard. There was, however, no sign of a beard upon my countenance. Hence I bought a razor and, to hurry matters on, shaved regularly twice a week.

One afternoon, as I sat shaving in my bedroom, my father burst in on me. Oh, my shame, my intolerable shame, as, razor in hand, I looked up, all lathered, into my father's face! My father's face wore a strange expression, half smile, half frown; and his eyes seemed frightened and confused. He turned and hurried forth with an incoherent apology.

I shaved Alfred Earle one winter afternoon.

"Show me your razor, will you?" he began.

"Here you are," said I.

He examined the razor, then he stroked his cheek and chin, which were covered with dark, fine hairs.

"I ought to begin to shave," he said.

"Yes," said I, "you ought."

"These hairs," he said, "don't seem long because they are curled up; but, when I straighten them—" he straightened them as he spoke—"look, they measure a full inch."

It was true.

"Shave me, will you?" said Alfred Earle sheepishly.

"Why, to be sure!" I cried.

And I stropped my razor, I prepared the lather in the cup, and I got ready a square of paper to wipe the blade upon.

Where, though, was Alfred Earle to sit? I put him here, I put him there, and finally I reclined him on my bed, with his head leaning back on the low footboard.

Standing behind the footboard, I lathered his face, rubbed in the lather with my fingers, then applied, in true barber fashion, another coat. It was great fun.

I opened my razor. "Steady!" I said. And I swept the blade down Alfred's cheek.

"Don't cut me!"

"No fear of that," said I, but even as I spoke the edge dug in a little. It dug in only a little; but, heavens, how the blood oozed out! In an instant all the lather on his chin was pink, and red drops fell swiftly, hurriedly, one after another, on to the towel that covered his chest.

"Don't cut me!" he repeated, unaware of the accident.

"Oh, no fear," said I.

It was with difficulty that I restrained my mirth. Alfred reclined on the bed so serenely, so confidently, his lathered face oozing and dripping gore. "I'm glad to see how careful you are," he observed.

Turning his head upon the footboard, I drew the razor down the other cheek. Again it dug in a little. Surely, though, this was no cut! Alas, a tiny pink fountain was already bubbling out through the lather.

He glanced down, saw blood on the razor, blood on the towel, and leapt to his feet with a cry of horror.

"You've cut me!"

He ran to the mirror and examined his wounds tenderly.

"You've cut me twice, damn you!"

"I couldn't help it," I replied; "you've got such a tender skin."

"Tender skin!"

I began to laugh. I laughed till the tears ran down my cheeks. Alfred also laughed. He reluctantly took up again his position on the bed. "I'll give you one more chance," he said. "But this time, for God's sake, be careful."

Shaking with mirth, I lathered him afresh, and, with tears of mirth blinding my eyes, I drew the razor across his chin, only to inflict a third cut.

"Oh, hell, shave yourself!" I cried.

I had now reached at Peabody the highest form. I headed the Sixth One. Billy Wilkins headed the Sixth

Two. Gilbert Allen could easily have excelled us both, but Gilbert only studied when it pleased him.

How hard I worked that last year at Peabody!

I rose at seven. On the hour's ride to town I reviewed the studies of the evening before, studies which I was now to spend the day reciting. I reached Peabody at nine, and, seated on a pine bench, I recited from nine till two—with a brief forty minutes' interval for luncheon—Latin and history, geometry and Greek. At four I got back home, took tea, and, from five till seven, studied for the morrow. And I studied again from eight till ten after dinner. At ten I went to bed.

That was my life—five hours at home preparing to recite, five hours at Peabody on a pine bench reciting. That was my life—a ten-hour day devoted to studies not one of which possessed the slightest interest.

Examination time approached. I desired not only to pass all my examinations—never had I flunked a single branch—but I desired to win the English prize as well.

There were four prizes, each a ten-dollar gold piece, one for Latin, one for Greek, one for mathematics, and one for English. Billy Wilkins was sure to win the other prizes, but I thought—and my father dared think, too—that the English prize might well fall to me.

Our examination rooms were bare and spacious. Two empty desks, to prevent our cheating, separated each boy from his nearest neighbour, and like a policeman our teacher prowled up and down the aisles, a look of the friendliest interest on his face; for our teacher hoped that, by doing well in our examinations, we would prove his year's work on us to have succeeded.

We, on our side, watched our teacher out of the tail

of one eye, and as soon as his back was turned our cribs came flying out.

It was in our Greek examination, conducted by good old Doctor Dobbins, that we used our cribs most freely. We displayed them to one another in the basement before the bell rang. Alfred Earle carried in the seat of his trousers the loose leaves of my interlinear translation of the first six books of the *Iliad*. Big John Murray's crib was longer than ever. Big John showed us how superbly he could run it backward and forward with one hand. He urged us to try it, but it was incredibly difficult, and we failed altogether. Before our failure, which proved his own superiority, big John chuckled, and pride and content beamed from his honest eye.

"The beauty of it," he reiterated, "is that it can't be detected." He drew the crib from his waistcoat. "Look. It is smaller almost than a match." He twirled it with thumb and finger back and forth. "I work it like this, close to my pocket, and at the first sign of danger, back it goes into its hole. It is safe, Banaker, positively safe. That is why I am so proud of it."

"Yes, yes, John," I absently replied, as I jotted the principal parts of an irregular verb on a visiting card.

The bell rang. We mounted to Doctor Dobbins's room. Our examination papers were distributed.

We knew that the innocence of Doctor Dobbins would make cheating easy, but who could have imagined that the doctor would actually leave us alone! Yet that is what he did.

"Young gentlemen," he said, "there are certain important tasks waiting me downstairs, and I know you will not take any unfair advantage of my absence."

Copy A

The doctor's noble and beautiful old face beamed on us. Then, in his garb of rich black, he went calmly forth.

The look we interchanged! Well, we said, we knew old Jimmy was innocent—But this!

And we drew out our cribs, we hurriedly asked one another questions that our cribs did not resolve—the second aorist of a verb, the construction of a clause—when—

“Murray! John Murray! Is it possible?”

At the open door stood Doctor Laud, a look of horror on his lean face, his lean forefinger pointed at big, stately John.

And John, proud, handsome, grown-up John sat paralysed with grief and terror, his crib, his impregnably safe crib, in his limp hand.

“Murray, bring that to me!”

Crushed ourselves, we beheld the crushed John Murray, red as a beefsteak, cross the room and give his crib to Doctor Laud.

“Now, Murray, go downstairs and report to the head master.”

We were crushed. It was as if God himself had suddenly been toppled over. We looked at one another with wide, horrified eyes. Big John departed.

Doctor Dobbins returned. He was very sad. He, too, seemed crushed. But, in his guileless way, he swung his chair round and began to read a book. We glanced at him cautiously. We glanced at him again and again. His back remained always turned. His book absorbed him. Out came our cribs.

With the doom of big John Murray hanging over us, we were at first very cautious. But time passed, Doc-

tor Dobbins's book held him like a vice, and we grew bolder.

We "copied" from one another's papers, we asked one another this question and that, we consulted our cribs.

Jimmy Sheridan whispered in my ear an inquiry about a verb, but I referred him to Billy Wilkins, for I wished to see whether or no Billy, who never cheated himself, would help in the cheating of another. Jimmy hesitated to appeal to Billy; he made a wry face; then he bent forward; and I saw Billy with a polite, embarrassed smile first listening to his question, then answering it carefully.

Alfred Earle grew bolder and bolder. Poor Alfred, he knew well that, for all his cheating, he had failed in nearly every branch. Desperate with this knowledge, he was determined to get through in Greek at least.

So now, with many terrified glances at Doctor Dobbins, he drew forth very cautiously from his trousers the two hundred loose leaves of the interlinear. He drew them forth and, presto, he sat on them. Then, a few leaves at a time, he took them from under his leg, consulted them, and thrust them back under his leg again. He was looking for the translation of a passage in Book IV., looking, it was evident, in vain. The mound that he sat on grew more and more disordered, and consequently more and more huge, as he hurriedly snatched from it and returned to it handfuls of loose leaves.

All of a sudden Doctor Dobbins swung round in his chair. With a look of horror Alfred Earle swept a dozen leaves from his desk on to the seat beneath him. But, alas, as he rose slightly, hen fashion, to receive those

leaves, a sheaf of other leaves fluttered from his chair and fell at the feet of Billy Wilkins.

Good Doctor Dobbins looked at Wilkins in consternation. Then he said, in stern, reproachful tones:

"Wilkins, bring me those papers, please."

"They are not mine, sir," said Billy Wilkins, and, with an easy smile, his eyes beaming with confidence and good-humour through his pince-nez, he carried the interlinear pages to Doctor Dobbins.

The doctor looked at them. He said:

"To whom do these papers belong?"

No answer.

"To whom do these papers belong, I ask?"

Silence.

"Wilkins," said the doctor, "I must request you to tell me the owner of these papers, since you declare—and I believe you, Wilkins—that you are not the owner yourself."

Billy Wilkins, who had resumed his seat, settled his pince-nez on his nose and answered calmly:

"I can't tell you, sir."

"You can't tell me! Why?"

Billy mused a moment, looking a little worried. Then he repeated, very respectfully:

"No, sir, I can't tell you."

"Then, Wilkins," said the doctor, "since suspicion points strongest at you, I shall have to consider you guilty. I shall have to ask you to retire."

Billy's shapely hand went a little tremulously to his pince-nez again.

"Yes, sir," he said, calmly and courageously, and he rose and gathered up his papers.

But here Alfred Earle's self-respect triumphed. Al-

fred rose and, with a gesture that did not lack a certain rough beauty, he pushed Billy Wilkins down into his seat again.

"I'm the guilty one, sir," said Alfred. He waved in the air the disordered mass of interlinear pages on which he had been sitting. "I dropped those papers, sir."

"Very well, Earle," said Doctor Dobbins, in a dejected tone. "You may go."

And Alfred, sweeping us with a look that did not lack a certain pride, thrust the enormous bundle of his crib under his arm and stalked with noisy bravado from the room.

First big John Murray! Then Alfred Earle! What a day!

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The morning of the final announcements came. We sat, wriggling with excitement, in the little chapel. The head-master announced that all four prizes had fallen to Billy Wilkins.

I could hardly believe that I had lost the English prize. It would have been so very, very pleasant just to get one prize. But for Billy Wilkins to get all—

And then, like a thunderbolt, came the announcement that I had failed in geometry, that I was conditioned in geometry. For the first time, the very first time, I was conditioned. And in my last year too! To leave Peabody, after having worked so hard, disgraced with a condition! Rage and shame—hell and despair—damn!

As, at four in the afternoon, I whirled up the straight white drive, between the sloping lawns of Banaker House, I saw my father and mother, under a striped

marquee on the terrace, taking tea. My father waved his hand, and his teeth flashed in a smile. He hoped, no doubt, to see me in possession of the English prize.

"I must get this scene over as soon as possible," I said to myself, and I stalked out on to the terrace forthwith.

My father had been reading Whittier aloud. On my approach he set the volume down amongst the silver and porcelain of the tea service. He looked up at me, his face glowing with joyous interest. He expected, it was plain, the best of news. And somehow this joyous expectation on his part astonished, hurt and angered me.

"Well," I said, "Wilkins got all four prizes, and I am conditioned in geometry."

My poor father's face!

"He's joking," said my mother. (I did, in truth, sometimes joke in this way.)

"Are you joking?" my father cried.

"'Joking?' No, I'm not joking. Wilkins took all the prizes, and I've got a condition—the first condition I ever had in my life."

My father's air was stern and accusatory.

"Oh," I said bitterly, "you needn't look at me like that. You know well enough how hard I worked."

"Yes, George," said my mother, "you know he worked hard, poor boy."

"It's luck!" I cried. "It's just rotten bad luck! I'd like to kill somebody!"

"Poor boy!" said my mother. "Sit down, and I'll send for some more tea."

But my father would say nothing. My father, his look still stern, rose and walked slowly across the terrace to the marble balustrade. He descended the mar-

ble stair. He traversed the lawn. The wood swallowed him up.

"You'd think it was his funeral instead of mine," I snarled.

And I glared at the wood which had swallowed him, while tears welled into my eyes, but I blinked them back angrily.

V

DESPITE his disappointment over my condition in geometry, my father, wishing me to enter the university with brilliance, hurried me in June to London for my wardrobe's sake. Boots, shirts, coats—everything for the university was to be English.

London in June—the tender verdure, the elegant throngs, the mild and glittering sunshine—what a delight! But my uncle, Count Martelli, whom my father had invited to London for a fortnight, brought with him, unasked, two cousins, Count Guglielmo and Count Pietro Noera, the brothers of the beautiful Emilia. (Emilia, Guglielmo and Pietro now lived permanently with my uncle and aunt at the Martelli palace in Rome.)

My father looked very solemn indeed when those unexpected guests were first presented to him; but they proved to be such trim, vivacious youths, they enjoyed so heartily the beauties and the gaieties of London, they were so sincerely and humbly grateful for my father's hospitality, one could not help but like them after all.

A blithe party of five males, we loitered in the Row every morning amid tall, slender men and women who had the serenity and elegance of gods. We saw the Derby; from the Ranelagh lawns we applauded a polo game; in white flannels at Maidenhead we nearly learned to punt. And in the wonderful June twilight, the clear, faint twilight resembling light under water, we glided swiftly in hansoms, in and out among the gayest

and most fashionable traffic, to restaurant or opera or music hall, afterwards attending, thanks to our ambassador, a reception at some smart house in Park Lane or Belgrave Square.

My father and I drove one morning to Poole's in Savile Row.

"So this is Poole's!" said I, staring in awe at the long, low, brown building.

"Yes, this is Poole's," said my father, "and we'll see that Mr. Brinkman cuts your coats."

Quiet dignity was the note of Poole's. Lecterns, set in the entrance, bore the *Morning Post*, the *Times*, and other aristocratic newspapers. Cloth was everywhere—I had never seen such an abundance of beautiful cloth. In glass cases splendid court and military uniforms glittered. Receptacles containing cigarettes were affixed to the walls, and my father took a cigarette and began to smoke. "They're free," he explained delightedly.

I bought at Poole's two overcoats, an evening suit, and six lounge suits of beautiful, soft fabrics. All fitted perfectly, yet I was a little disappointed in them. Were they not tame?

We visited a bootmaker's in Dover Street, a small shop sweet with the smell of Russia leather. Here gleamed boots and shoes of perfect grace, of perfect workmanship, boots and shoes worthy to stand beside fine old furniture in a museum. And while I ordered riding boots, boots with grey cloth tops, patent-leather buttoned boots, dancing shoes, hand-brogued brown shoes, the foreman told my father that his trade was dying out, that it was now almost impossible to find lads willing to undergo the long apprenticeship which such a trade required.

My boots, like my clothes, fitted perfectly; yet I found them tame.

I bought at Tremlett's in Conduit Street morning shirts of crisp and delicate batiste, and evening shirts of rich, heavy linen. And in all, despite their perfect fit, I was a little disappointed.

For, at the age of sixteen, my idea of elegance in dress was something that startled, something that even stunned. The dress of London, of so quiet an elegance, would pass unnoticed, I knew well, among my mates at home, and to me at sixteen it seemed that an elegance which passed unnoticed was no elegance at all.

How my father enjoyed his London holiday! He changed his coiffure and the tilt of his hat to accord with the London mode; and ceasing, for the same reason, to carry a walking-stick, he began to sport a *boutonnière*. His accent, too, became more English, while certain American corruptions that had crept in—"store" for "shop," "derby" for "bowler," "Prince Albert" for "frock coat"—were rigorously banished from his vocabulary. My father, in a word, gaily leading his expensive troop from the Row to Prince's, from the Opera to the Savoy, now resembled to the last detail a happy, handsome and fashionable duke.

We returned in July. I bought on my arrival more clothes, clothes after my own heart, clothes that would not pass unnoticed anywhere—shoes incredibly pointed, trousers incredibly loose, a bowler hat called a "fried egg" on account of its incredible flatness, a walking-stick as thick as my arm—and with this wardrobe, the *dernier cri* of 1889, I betook myself to my grandmother's cottage at Cape May, there, all summer long, to toss and quiver in the first soft blasts of adolescent love.

I remember well the August afternoon when, at last, I dared address her.

Mildred lay on her side on the white sand, a girl of fifteen, her cheek supported by her palm, reading a book. The sunshine drenched her grave and beautiful face with gold. In her brown hair, which fell in rich clusters over her shoulder, there were golden strands. Her brown eyes had flecks of gold in them—floating golden motes—like gay sunbeams in broken water.

Slim and supple, she wore a white dress, white stockings and white shoes.

Now and then her lids lifted, her brown eyes passed gravely over the gay and crowded beach, over the bathers leaping and shouting in the surf, over me. But her eyes greeted me no more than they greeted the waves that, one by one, crashed in showers of light behind me.

How vexatious! I rose from my seat near her on the sand, I strolled to and fro a moment, then I took another seat still nearer.

But, as before, her eyes passed over me as though I were a log, and at last Harry Hamm presented himself. Then she rose. Harry Hamm brushed the sand from her gown. She walked away beside him with her supple gait. Me she did not deign a parting glance.

Hurt and sad, I mused, "Is it possible, after all these weeks, she hasn't noticed me?" And I considered in perplexity my white flannel trousers looser than a Turk's, my short, tight blazer of red and blue flannel, and my sash of rich red silk with its fringed ends hanging, like a sabretache, on my left hip. Surely, with all my elegance, she must have noticed me! But my looks, perhaps, displeased her.

A great blow fell on my shoulder, and Alfred Earle's

voice cried, "Go and get your bathing suit. We're waiting for you."

It was impossible to be sad in the cheery, healthy presence of Alfred Earle, and I hurried to my bath-house. Alfred, while I undressed, studied me from the door.

"You still keep thin," he said. "I don't like your English shoes. But your sash is handsome. It is like the one the widow gave me."

I bent over, and with a loud laugh Alfred cried:

"How your backbone sticks out! I could play a tune on it. Tum-tiddle-y-umtum!" With his hands he ran up and down my bare backbone as if it were a keyboard.

Alfred Earle at seventeen was a man, with a man's muscles and a man's beard; and, as Jimmy Sheridan had been a bully incarnate, so Alfred was an incarnate libertine.

"The widow," he said pensively, abandoning my backbone. "Did I ever tell you about the night she—"

But I hurriedly changed the subject. I always changed the subject when it turned to love. For I was ignorant of love: I had never so much as kissed a girl's cheek: and of this ignorance I could not but be ashamed.

Alfred praised the widow's sash ardently. It was, on second thought, far handsomer than my own. Then his mind reverted to love again.

"I'm going out with Edith to-night," he said. "I think I'll take her to Lily Lake this time."

He leered and winked, and again I changed the subject. But he pursued:

"Edith wants to meet you, Brian."

"All right."

"It's very well to say 'All right.' But you'll back

out again. Oh, I know you! Why don't you want to meet her?"

"I am ready enough to meet her," I stammered. "I'll meet her now if you like."

Alfred Earle's eyes searched mine; and his mocking and superior smile bespoke a perfect knowledge, a perfect understanding—

"Brian—tell the truth now—did you ever——"

"Oh, shut up!" I cried, blushing furiously.

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed Alfred Earle, and he poked me in the ribs and stomach with his manly fists.

We descended in our bathing-suits to the beach. The beach glittered like snow in the July sunshine. In long lines the stately breakers arched, they advanced proudly, they crashed, and in broad sheets of hissing foam glided up the firm sands. The tiny black figures of a thousand bathers tossed amid the breakers like wreckage or drift-wood.

I swam in the pure and thrilling water, looking up at the blue sky. At last I saw her again.

How pretty she was, how brown, how shapely, in her short blue bathing-dress. She descended to the water's edge with Harry Hamm. She put the point of her foot in a receding wave, then drew it back hurriedly, with a contortion of her supple shoulders, as though she found the water very cold. Harry Hamm splashed her, and with closed eyes, with rigid muscles, she shrieked.

I drew near; I performed all my best feats, turning subaqueous somersaults, standing on my hands, swimming great distances under water; and at the end of each feat I shot a quick and hopeful glance at her. But not once did her eyes meet mine.

In my wet bathing-suit, after she was gone, I basked

with Alfred Earle and half a dozen other boys in the sunshine on the warm sand. Alfred sang obscene songs, he told obscene stories, then he began to narrate his amours.

We listened gravely, with downcast eyes and a certain embarrassment, stretched upon our stomachs, with our heads together, like the spokes of a wheel. Alfred boasted on and on; there was a strange smile on his stout, coarse face; he seemed really to believe his own boasts.

We believed him. And we listened with respect, silent, motionless, our eyes downcast, acknowledging in our secret souls that, since such adventures never befell us, we must lack a certain manly charm possessed by Alfred Earle.

He had, indeed, charm—the charm of health, high spirits, and a robust figure of much grace. To see him playing baseball or tennis thrilled and uplifted the heart.

And yet, as I brooded on the sand, I could not but remember that all the girls with whom he consorted were coarse. I had seen him with many girls, yet never with a nice one. With a girl like Mildred now—

Would not Alfred, if he knew Mildred, worship her humbly? Could it be possible that Alfred, unabashed before Mildred's delicate and pure soul, would look down on her too as on some lower animal, capturing her calmly in this game of love, as a skilful angler captures a fish?

After luncheon I sought her again. She sat on the sand, and I seated myself near her.

It was early in the afternoon. We had the beach to ourselves. Why shouldn't I accost her?

The thought frightened me. But I rose and advanced awkwardly. I stood awkwardly before her.

In the silence her lids lifted, her brown eyes looked up at me from her book in frank, calm interrogation. She sat cross-legged on the white sand, her slim brown forearms resting on her knees.

As for me, I stammered, grinning nervously:

"Excuse me, but—I'm so anxious to meet you—I know I'd like you——"

The beautiful face lost none of its calm serenity.

"Mother doesn't let me speak to boys without an introduction."

"Who could introduce us?" I mused. My embarrassment was already gone, lost in a delicious sense of pure, clean happiness. "Do you know Alfred Earle?" I asked.

"No," said she. "Do you know Mrs. Hawkins?"

And we went over name after name till finally we hit on a mutual acquaintance, one Billy Hall. Yes, Billy Hall would introduce us. And I lifted my red and blue cap and bowed with awkward reverence. She nodded gravely. I trudged away in my gaudy finery. Looking back, I saw that she had resumed her wonted pose, lying on her side, her cheek supported by her palm, reading a book. Then Harry Hamm appeared.

The next day we were introduced, and I passed a month of idyllic happiness. We were never separated. Meeting in the morning, we strolled the sands till the bathing hour. We bathed together in the sunshine until luncheon. In the afternoon we boated in my grandmother's launch, or perhaps we fished, or crabbed, or played tennis.

But the evening was the best of all, for there was an informal dance somewhere every evening, and be-

tween the dances we strolled the moonlit beach arm-in-arm.

The desolate figure of Harry Hamm crossed the path of my love pleasantly, and the gay figure of Alfred Earle crossed it painfully.

I imagined Alfred Earle's sneers before a love like mine. How sentimental and weak must such a love seem to him. He, perhaps, if he knew Mildred—

"Mildred, what do you think of Alfred Earle?"

"I think he's horrid."

"But he is popular with girls. If he should go out with you—"

"I wouldn't go out with him," said Mildred firmly.

We never talked of love. We talked sensibly, as two boys, as two girls might have done. I never dreamed of kissing her, of encircling her waist with my arm, of holding her hand. Yet love possessed me. In delicious reveries I fell asleep each night; I woke to delicious reveries each morning. But in my ethereal and exalted love I had no desire to embrace Mildred. She seemed too flowerlike for anything so coarse as an embrace. Humbly to lift and kiss a glittering strand of her brown hair would have seemed almost sacrilege.

VI

OF college my vividest memory is sad—the memory of our rejection of Gilbert Allen.

At college I myself was welcomed warmly. Nor is this astounding. For my father, who accompanied me to college in order to introduce me there in person, was chairman of the Board of Trustees, treasurer of the Alumni, and president of the College of Royalists, an organization admitting only collegians of royal blood. My rooms, furthermore, were sumptuous. The largest suite in Haakon Hall, with small white bays and balconies opening on the quad, my low-ceiled, panelled rooms presented a dark, rich, gleaming vista of Persian rugs, carved wood, and stamped and gilded leather. A brindled bull-terrier and a white deer-hound drowsed before the fire. Three Sisleys, borrowed from Baneker House, radiated their splendid golden sunshine from the sombre oaken walls. There were books and flowers, my family tree hung over my writing-desk, and drawn brown curtains revealed, beyond my study, the inlaid, massive legs of a huge billiard table. I had, besides, horses—a riding horse and a pair of restive greys that I drove tandem, as the fashion was in 1889, to a high red cart. I had also a man-servant. No, it is not astounding that my welcome at college was warm.

My first triumph was my election to the class presidency of '93. My second was my admission into Nu

Gamma, a secret society of which that year only four of our two hundred freshmen were deemed worthy.

It was in Nu Gamma's club-house, sprawled in manly attitude in a huge armchair, that I first learned—while learning also cigarette inhalation—the importance and significance of muckers.

Muckers: To my mind, ere I entered Nu Gamma, muckers were a sparse and negligible crew—ragged lads, for example, who hurled bricks at you from foul alleys, or drunken hod-carriers who beat their wives in front of bar-rooms—and even outcasts such as these, if once you got to know them, might prove to have some good in them after all, some trace of good which showed them to be not muckers altogether.

But in Nu Gamma, drawing with a shudder my cigarette smoke down into my lungs, I learned that muckers overran the world. Everybody, in fact, or practically everybody, was a mucker. He alone escaped the universal doom who possessed two rare qualifications: first, inherited wealth, and, second, aristocratic birth.

Gilbert Allen, then, was a mucker. Nevertheless I missed him for a while amid Nu Gamma's splendours.

"Couldn't we squeeze him in?" I ventured, inhaling a cloud of smoke which staggered me like a kick in the chest from a mule.

Alfred Earle started. "Him? Why, he's a mucker!"

"Allen?" said Billy Wilkins, and he looked up from *une Vie* with an astonished smile.

"But we all liked him at Peabody," I said faintly. These repeated clouds, drawn deep down into my lungs, were making me dizzy. The palms of my hands, too, had grown wet.

"Peabody isn't college."

And Alfred Earle went crudely into the details of the Allen family's muckerism. They dined at noon. They kept but one servant. Furthermore, they were Methodists. Methodists!

Billy Wilkins laughed harshly. It was plain that he disapproved of Alfred's details as snobbish. Yet with the trend of Alfred's argument he agreed. "Gilbert is a fine chap," he said gently, "but, if you visited him, Brian, you would understand."

"Understand what?"

But Billy, shrugging his broad shoulders, returned to *une Vie* in silence.

"It seems a pity, anyhow," I mused.

And I remembered, on the way back to Haakon Hall, that we would have known nothing of the Allens' poverty had not Gilbert told us of it himself. Dr. and Mrs. Allen gladly adopted every economy in order to educate their son. Appreciating the beauty of the lad's mind, they had even desired to send him to Oxford; but Gilbert had said to me at Peabody—and I now remembered mournfully the tenderness in his voice—"I've refused to go to Oxford, Brian. I want to stay with you and Billy Wilkins and the rest. It will be so jolly for us all to be together at college, won't it?"

And now college was cutting our friendship like a knife. Poor Gilbert! It was indeed unlucky for him that his three best friends should be aristocrats—genuine Nu Gamma aristocrats.

The next morning our Nu Gamma pins arrived, and we wore them for the first time, Alfred and Billy and I, upon our waistcoats. They impressed all. The reverence, the envy, in all those clear young eyes! But in Gilbert Allen's eyes there was sorrow.

I watched him furtively and shamefacedly during chapel. The lad was more spirit than flesh, and the workings of his mind were visible, like those of the mind of a child. Now, standing beside me, his lips moving in an absent recitation of the creed, he drooped, his attitude sad and desolate. Now, for appearances' sake, he drew himself up smartly, he looked about him with a jaunty air. Now sorrow overcame him again, and he gazed out of the window in a dream.

Too well I knew his thoughts. "They desert me for something I can't help, something outside myself, something of no real importance."

A nudge caused me to turn. "Look at Allen." And Alfred Earle smiled and winked, enjoying his new pin's triumph to the full.

But I, for my part, felt sick. Yes, my snobbishness sickened me like those smoke clouds that I drew down into my lungs in the effort to learn inhalation.

But I persevered. I persevered in inhalation because it was both difficult and smart; the smoke poured from mouth and nostrils in a paler, swifter stream than ordinary smoke; it gave one distinction. And so, too, snobbishness, the aristocratic air, the calm, godlike air of absolute and unquestionable supremacy, was difficult and smart, and in it I also persevered until at last I could meet a gentle kindness with a snub as easily as I could inhale a great cloud of Yenidge tobacco.

In the beginning, when his old friends' rejection first dawned upon him, Gilbert Allen wore a hurt, amazed and incredulous look. Then his look became sad, almost reproachful. In the end he avoided us; but, when we met, he endeavoured to be friendly and natural as of old. This was his pride, which did not deceive us.

And sometimes, in our leather armchairs, over our cigarettes at the great bay-window of Nu Gamma, we allowed ourselves the luxury of pity. "Too bad," we said. "No fault of his own. But of course—" And Billy Wilkins, handsome, studious, correct, would shrug his strong shoulders, and over his fine, strong face a compassionate and stupid smile would pass.

Poor Gilbert! Our snobbishness withered and spoiled him as frost withers and spoils a flower. He, the finest mind of us all, began to neglect his studies. In Latin, in Greek, even in English, we beheld, day after day, the incredible spectacle of Gilbert Allen answering stupidly, failing wretchedly. After a month or two he began to cut his recitations. He made friends with a disreputable crew, the dregs of the class. Sometimes I saw him noisily entering a bar-room with a group of shabby lads. One evening, a little drunk, he passed me with a jug of foaming lager in his hand. He passed me, then he turned and halted.

"Brian, is that you?" he called. There was all the old gaiety in his voice.

"Hello, Gilbert," said I, stopping under a lamp.

He came towards me hurriedly. His luminous eyes rested in mine, full of happiness and affection. He stumbled over a projecting stone and, nearly falling, he laughed breathlessly.

"Come to my rooms, Brian. Do! I want to read you some Swinburne—a chorus against God—it's glorious. Don't refuse now! It will be like old times. We'll make a night of it."

But I was on my way to a box-party, and, settling my new opera hat firmly, I said:

"No, I can't. I'm going to see *The Brigands*."

At this rebuff the exaltation faded from his face, and, cold and sad, he nodded.

"Oh! Good night, then."

And he turned and hurried unsteadily out of the lamp-light with his jug: a thin, shabby, ridiculous figure, a drunken boy. I stood and looked after him. He stumbled and nearly fell again. Then he vanished in the dark. My heart melted. I was tempted to go to his rooms, after all. But, remembering *The Brigands*, I set off through the cold and clear November night with brisk steps in my lustrous evening dress under the throbbing splendour of the stars.

And now, for weeks at a time, I saw nothing of him. For weeks at a time he cut every recitation. His life passed, I was informed, in cheap billiard parlours and cheap bar-rooms. He disappeared at last. Just before the mid-year examinations, which he would inevitably have flunked, he disappeared altogether. Poor Gilbert Allen!

I meanwhile, thanks to my birth and wealth, rose from crest to crest of social glory. What with my horses, my clothes, my valet, I was the leading freshman of the year.

At school at Banakerburg I had been called Brian, I was Banaker at Peabody, and now, at college, they called me Mr. Banaker, like a man. I had, too, a man's freedom: I could cut my recitations without accounting to anyone: there was no more compulsion at college about attending recitations than there is in the world about attending church.

Otherwise, college was like school—long hours alone preparing to recite, long hours on a hard pine bench in class reciting. But the freedom!

I was happy at college, and my happiness reached its climax at our freshman class supper, where I treated all hands to champagne.

The supper at first was stiff and dull. At a long, white, narrow table we sat, a hundred freshmen of sixteen or seventeen years, eating complex and luke-warm dishes without appetite, and smiling in uneasy fashion. Each face seemed to ask, "Where is all the fun? How is it that, on this gorgeous occasion, we are not having any fun?" Some of us were in evening dress, but the majority wore lounge suits of blue or black.

At the supper's end cigars, pipes and cigarettes were lighted, and, sipping "ice water," we leaned back in our chairs for the toasts. Would the fun now, perhaps, begin?

But the toasts were dreadful. I had no idea that stage fright could assume such dreadful form. The stage fright of those who responded to the serious toasts—the stage fright of Alfred Earle and Billy Wilkins—was bad enough, but the stage fright of those who endeavoured to be funny! I can see, as I write, big John Murray, erect in elegant evening dress at the head of a long white table, a ghastly grin on his scarlet face, floundering hopelessly in a waste of meaningless words, trying for ten minutes to be funny about "The Ladies."

It was in my agony over big John's failure that I ventured to order the champagne.

It arrived, and its effect was magical. One gulp of that cold, clear, hissing wine, and we were embarrassed boys no longer. Men, we exchanged manly smiles.

As soon as the champagne was finished, we began to order, each on his own account, the strangest, manliest

drinks—silver fizzes, pousse-cafés, curdled absinthes, baisers d'amour.

Alfred Earle and I, seated side by side, tossed off little glasses of chartreuse, now the green, now the yellow, Billy Wilkins, always rigorously correct, sipped port and ate walnuts. Down amongst the muckers Gilbert Allen—he was a reporter, I had heard—lounged in a yellow suit behind a huge bottle of rye whisky, a long, black cigar slanting upwards from the corner of his mouth.

How happy I was! It seemed to me that I had never been so happy before. I sipped my honey-sweet chartreuse, and a thrill of ecstasy ran over my whole being. I looked at my friends' flushed faces smiling through fragrant smoke wreaths, and it seemed to me that now, for the first time, I really knew and loved my friends. It seemed to me that hereafter a different feeling altogether, a feeling as it were of blood brotherhood, would unite us. I was very happy in this thought.

I remember gripping Billy Wilkins's hand and crying warmly, "You're all right! Put it there!" But some one clapped me on the back of the head, knocking the cigar from my mouth. I turned angrily. Big John Murray's face beamed into mine. "Put it there, Banaker! You're all right!" An orgy of handshaking and mutual eulogia ensued.

I remember my grief before Alfred Earle's sudden demand that we go to Molly Stanton's. This demand, continually recurring, stabbed my happiness like a knife. But Alfred's voice would die down ineffectually, and my happiness would return again, only to flee afresh before the damnable cry—"Come on! Let's go to Molly's!"

I remember wandering through dark and silent cor-

ridors with a bottle of champagne in one hand and a glass in the other, seeking Billy Wilkins, who had discreetly retired. A waiter led me back to the banqueting hall. Scarcely a dozen freshmen were now left. They greeted my advent boisterously. We all shook hands again. "Come on! Molly's!" cried Alfred Earle.

I remember a mad rush in the cold winter night through the strange silence and solitude of a lamp-lit street. The clatter of unsteady feet and the sound of feverish voices came to me as from a great way off. Windows were smashed and signs wrenched down amid vacant laughter. Suddenly a cry arose. "Cops! Cops!" But this cry, too, came from a great way off. And now, in a blind confusion, I was conscious of a scuffle, oaths, a blow in the face, a headlong fall. . . . Who had fallen? Whose face had met the dull and heavy impact of that blow? Who now lay in the gutter? I! And I rose unsteadily. I gave a stupid laugh. Rough arms bundled me into a patrol-wagon. I fell asleep at once.

A plaintive yell pierced my slumber. "Let him go! I'm a reporter. Here is my police card. You'd better let him go! He's Brian Banaker, the son—"

But a burly policeman struck my friend with all his might on the ear, and the tall, frail, yellow-clad form of Gilbert Allen dropped like a log.

Sleep overcame me again. I awoke in a grey stone cell, on a grey stone floor, sick beyond belief, heart-broken.

I sat on the grey floor for hours. The darkness changed to grey light. Sick beyond belief, heart-broken, tears streaming from my eyes, my back against the wall, my legs stretched out before me, my chin bowed on my

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soiled and crumpled shirt-bosom, I told myself again and again and yet again that I would never, under any circumstances, touch another drop of alcoholic drink as long as I lived, so help me God.

VII

FOR nearly a week after my debauch I was the victim of an abominable nervous depression. I suffered a consuming grief, as though I had lost a brother, and an awful dread, as though about to be hanged.

I would awake in the night, I would see myself gripping Billy Wilkins's hand and crying warmly, "You're all right—put it there!" and this memory would overwhelm me with horror and shame.

I would see myself seated in crumpled evening dress on the cell floor, my opera hat beside me, my back against the cell wall, while in the grey light of dawn, with tears streaming from my eyes, I mumbled my vows of penitence and reform.

And, tortured, I writhed in my bed. I threshed about with legs and arms. But in the silent night I saw myself anew, a picture as distinct and bright as a cinematograph, standing before the magistrate, listening, with dishevelled head bowed on bulging shirt bosom, to the old magistrate's wise and kindly reproof.

Every word I had uttered, every deed I had done, came back to me; and words and deeds alike, even the most trivial, tore like red-hot pincers. I felt that I was ruined and disgraced for life.

Yet this feeling was, I knew, illusory: a figment, due to alcoholic poisoning, as unreal as a figment of delirium. I had, to be sure, got drunk; I had even been arrested—

but, after all, this did not mean life-long ruin and disgrace. There was not much in this to trouble a spirited freshman of seventeen. Yes, my despair was illusory. Yet no real despair could have been profounder. And happy indeed was I when, at the end of a week, my restored nerves allowed me to look back on my debauch with a spirited freshman's healthy laughter.

There came, however, a letter from my mother. There came a visit from my father.

Gilbert Allen, scurrying about all night, had managed to keep my arrest out of the newspapers; but wind of it had reached my parents' ears, and, rather to my surprise, they took it hard. I had not thought that they would take it hard; for I had often heard them laugh with indulgence, even with a certain respect, over the drunken escapades of this young man or that. It seemed, however, that my own drunken escapades were different.

My mother's letter was astounding. It ran from reproaches to menaces, and from menaces to tears. And this from my mother over my arrest, when she had laughed almost with pride, only last month, over the arrest of Cousin Harry Dorsey, who leapt from box to stage, the night the team broke training, and kissed Marie Delorme in her pretty ballet dress!

My father arrived. "My poor boy!" he said, and he shook my hand and looked into my eyes with a kind of broken-hearted sympathy, as if I had committed murder.

We dined at the Belair in silence and embarrassment. We drank Apollinaris—a tribute to the cause of abstinence—and, when the coffee came, my father ventured timidly forth on a moral harangue.

Perhaps, he faltered, he was to blame. Perhaps my allowance was too large. Perhaps, also, he had influ-

enced me, in his worldly way, too much in the direction of elegance, of smartness, and not enough in the direction of clean and upright living.

"I never seemed," he faltered, "to think about such things. 'Wild oats'—'boys will be boys'—all that seemed right enough—or, at least, natural enough. I used to laugh over it. I rather admired it. It was smart. But now—Oh, Brian!"

My father paused. He looked down at his little cup. Then, lifting his eyes to mine, he said, in a tremulous voice, with a constrained and awkward smile:

"Brian, it's so different with you! We hope so much for you, your mother and I. We want you to escape all our mistakes. We want your—happiness—"

My father looked down at his cup again, unable to go on; and he continued to smile awkwardly, as if ashamed of his emotion. In the silence, as I gazed at him across the table, I remembered all my failings and errors and misdeeds, and it seemed to me at once pathetic and foolish and noble in my father that he should care so much for one like me, should hope so much from one like me. To comfort him, I said hurriedly:

"I have sworn off, father."

He lifted his eyes, all luminous, to mine. "Good!" he cried. "Good!"

And we set out in a hansom for the "Banakeria," my father's private car. (My father, as the Oil City and Millville Railroad's new president, had come into possession of a private car last year.)

Boarding the "Banakeria" at the station, my father clasped my hand and said:

"My boy, I want you to be smart, but above all I want you to be good."

"It isn't smart to be too good," said I.

My father frowned, then laughed confusedly. "Well," he said, "you can't be too good for your mother and me."

Though goodness and smartness seemed irreconcilable qualities, I combined them during the rest of my freshman year. My smartness brought me my first reward, the nickname of "Beau" Banaker.

Loving beauty, I loved beautiful raiment. My long lines of boots in their brass-mounted forms, my cravats of rich, fresh silk, my coats with their trim balance, my linen, heavy and white for evening wear, crisp and delicately coloured for the day—all these things, which I loved and respected as one loves and respects books and pictures, all these things made slowly and carefully by hand from the finest materials by the best workmen, distinguished me from my friends, who, inclining to sneer at these things as unimportant, possessed them in no such abundance, in no such perfection, as myself.

I dressed in the American rather than the English mode. The English mode I found too quiet. It was, besides, always five or six years ahead of the American. Hence he who wore English clothes—my father, for example—was deemed, save by the initiate few, queer rather than elegant in his attire. When, at last I took to English clothes myself, I quickly lost my nickname of "Beau" Banaker.

Always a good runner, I now began to train for the quarter mile. I abandoned tea and coffee, tobacco and alcohol. And under training I first realized the joy, the unspeakable joy, of perfect and abounding health. My health, indeed, was an intoxication. I was continu-

ally conscious of it. I continually felt it flowing, flowing like wine, through every vein.

And the delight of running! My legs and arms and body seemed to form a perfect machine, a tireless machine; and each afternoon, in gossamer shirt and trunks, under the blue sky, in the glittering sunshine, I ran swiftly and lightly on my toes through delicious airs that fanned my bare, moist flesh.

My face took on a golden-brown hue. My chest grew broader and deeper, my waist slimmer and suppler. A clear light beamed from my eyes. Sometimes, in the black and white of evening dress, it seemed to me that I was almost handsome.

My friends continued to be the Nu Gamma set, the sons of rich and powerful families. We all had, my friends and I, our family trees, which, painted on parchment, hung conspicuously in our sitting-rooms. These family trees carried us back to William the Conqueror, to Charlemagne, to Richard Cœur de Lion, or, as in my case, to the Princes of Powys. There were crests and mottoes on our stationery, our sleeve links, our seal rings; and many of us had enormous coats of arms carven in gold upon the backs of our watches.

Yet we were all in trade—Inherited trade. Billy Wilkins was in iron, Alfred Earle in sugar, Peter Corbin Carson, 3rd, in liver pills, etc. This did not detract, however, from our elegance. And sometimes, before the fire in Nu Gamma, as I looked round the spacious room with its rich rugs and mahogany wainscoting and shaded reading lamps, the elegance of my friends thrilled me. Athletes for the most part, my friends were sun-burnt, with crisp hair, clear eyes, and small, white, even teeth. Their chests were broad and their waists supple, and

they carried themselves with an easy, slouching grace. Their lounge suits of soft, rough tweed, cut by the most expensive tailors, brought out the best lines of their vigorous and lithe figures. Their linen, fresh and delicate, accented the gold note in their sun-burnt skin. Their boots, at once stout and shapely, looked always new. Their cravats of rich, fresh silk were knotted with a dashing carelessness. And they wore their finery unconsciously. Forgetful of it, they rumpled one another's well-brushed hair, they knocked and pushed one another about, like young animals. They were, indeed, young animals, beautiful young animals, sun-burnt and wind-blown, sane and clean.

Alfred Earle continued his amours, which he would narrate before the fire. In our smart clothes we would loll, a half-dozen of us, in great armchairs of green leather, smoking cigarettes or meerschaums with a man-of-the-world air, and listening to Alfred in silence and embarrassment, a cloud on our young brows.

Billy Wilkins continued a model of correctness. Billy no longer, as at Peabody, stood at the head of his class: he explained that it was more correct to be moderate in study as in all things: so he stood some twenty places below the head. He went in for the milder athletic sports, doing particularly well in the standing broad jump. He read all the best books; there was no literary success he did not cultivate; and I still see him vividly, in his favourite armchair, perusing *la Main Gauche* or *Marius the Epicurean*. But at the purely popular successes of the day—at *David Harum* or *Robert Elsmere*—Billy sneered. Though he liked me, I could never feel at ease in his presence. In his firm, correct, cool presence I still felt as constrained as in the presence of a

clergyman. Billy had become a smoker, and was carefully colouring a huge meerschaum carved in the shape of a girl's leg.

In Peter Corbin Carson, 3rd, I had an ardent and absurd worshipper. Carson, who was short and fat, copied my dress, my habits, even my walk. His pipes were like mine. His cigarettes were of my brand. Though no reader, he invariably bought the books I recommended, and I would find him conning them, stretched out in my favourite attitude in a Nu Gamma armchair, his hat cocked at my angle, and a pipe like mine between his teeth.

Gilbert Allen often came to see me. He was doing well now as a reporter—so well, indeed, that his parents had grown almost reconciled to his abandonment of college.

"I'm glad I got out," he would say. "I couldn't stand mathematics, you know. To spend a couple of hours on a proposition in geometry when I might be reading a masterpiece—no, siree!"

"But," said I, "our English courses are good."

"Good!" he scoffed. "Why, I once asked Professor Harrison if Poe wasn't a great artist, and Harrison said he knew nothing of Poe, but Marie Corelli was an author of whom much would be heard."

Gilbert often read me his effusions—the beginnings of tales and novels never to be finished. I did not like his effusions much. They seemed vague, thin, stiff. He often confessed, with a smile of shame, that this was an imitation of Henry James, that of Walter Pater, and here was a story of adventure in the manner of Stevenson, and here a scene after Meredith.

"I'm ashamed of them when I read them aloud," he

would say. "I blush when I come to certain passages. So I know they are worthless. I am ashamed, too, of imitating."

"Why do you imitate, then?"

"I can't help it," he confessed.

So we would talk till midnight, I sprawled on a sofa, he pacing up and down, a tall, frail, shabby figure, a flushed face delicate as a girl's, clear eyes whence blue lights glanced and beamed.

About this time my father gave me *Notes for Boys*.

Notes for Boys was a little volume devoted to sex which urged boys to be Galahads. It was not enough, according to *Notes for Boys*, that we should let women alone: we must also see to it that women let us alone: we boys must protect women even against themselves.

Notes for Boys was a superb Victorian lie. It pretended that human beings could be "pure"—could exist, that is to say, without love and without the desire of love—and, shutting its eyes to the truth, *Notes for Boys* lied as he would have to do who should pretend that human beings can exist without food and without the desire of food.

My father had underscored many passages in *Notes for Boys*, and here and there he had added a note of his own.

The clammy and stupid book raised a barrier between us. For a long time my father and I flushed on meeting. For a long time we could not look each other in the face.

In the "Banakeria," with a party of their most elegant friends, my father and mother came in state in May to see me run the quarter-mile.

The May sky arched overhead its canopy of luminous

blue. Splendid and joyous was the sunshine. My brother athletes, grouped here and there, looked skinny and pale in their sleeveless shirts of gauze and their short, loose white trunks. And about us uprose, tier on widening tier, thousands of spectators, a vast garden—faces, plumes, parasols—all softly moving and murmuring and gleaming like a garden in a breeze.

I crouched very low. On my toes, the tips of my fingers lightly resting on the ground, I held every muscle taut, and the elastic strength which I could feel in all my muscles comforted me. But would the pistol never sound?

Bang!

I had made a good start unconsciously, and now, after a little worry, I found myself running with all my usual elastic smoothness. It was a joy to run like this. I felt that I would never tire. Two men were ahead of me, but I could have passed them both with ease.

As I ran by my class stand, a wild clamour—college yell, class yell, my own name—renewed my strength and courage.

Increasing my speed, I passed Jackson. Vibbert, however, kept his lead. I could not pass Vibbert without straining. It was too early to strain yet.

A third, a half—and Vibbert still kept his lead. I still ran smoothly and buoyantly, breathing with ease. But something, I know not what, told me that I must soon begin my spurt, or I would not have the strength for it.

Two-thirds—and now my breath, my strength, began to fail. Earlier than my custom, earlier than was best, I spurted.

I gained on Vibbert. Yard after yard I gained. I

cut down his lead to five, to four, to three—and then he turned his head, gave me a frenzied look, and spurring in his turn, lengthened his lead to seven yards again.

My heart sank. Vibbert would win. Vibbert was sure to win. Nevertheless I threw back my head, opened my mouth, clenched my fists, and how I ran, how I ran!

My chest was bursting; my eyes seemed about to leap from their sockets; fiery needles ran through my flesh. But my legs kept good, and, inch by inch, I gained on Vibbert again. But could I hold out?

"Brian! Good boy! Go it!"

Big John Murray's face, all red and contorted with hope and anxiety, appeared and disappeared; it seemed to move goalward; it seemed, that red, contorted face, actually to push me home to victory; and with one last, dreadful effort, the while my heart tried to tear my chest open, I passed Vibbert, I struck the tape a foot in the lead, I dropped on the grass amid a mighty roar.

My father hurried towards me.

"All right?" he whispered.

"Oh, yes, thanks; I'm all right."

"Hurrah!" said my father, in a low voice. "Hurrah! It was splendid!"

The joy in my father's eyes!

And at the year's end I increased my father's joy by winning, with my essay on Alexander Smith, the English gold medal.

Yes, I combined goodness and smartness during my freshman year, and they brought me my reward, but assuredly the best of my reward was my father's happiness.

VIII

I ABANDONED study and athletics in my sophomore year, turning instead to drink.
Why?

Because, forsooth, I got more happiness out of drink than out of study and athletics. I got more happiness out of drink, indeed, than out of anything else on earth.

But the dreadful awakening in the morning—the headache, the nausea, the sadness! Alas, that I would pay so dear a price for drink only proves how exquisite was the happiness it gave me.

My fame as a drinker increased my fame as an aristocrat and *élégant*. My nickname of Beau Banaker revived. I somehow got the reputation, too, of being a devil with the women. An embarrassing reputation, this last. I never knew whether to deny or to ignore it.

My wild ways brought me respect among my mates; but my father, after my flunk in geometry, a disaster followed by my second arrest, ceased to speak to me altogether. His face became cold and stern when I appeared. Even at table he would not address me, handing me this dish or that with averted head. I did not care. I sneered at him. Drunkenness, with all its drawbacks, I deemed a fine, brave protest against Puritanism.

So, in my junior year, I went from bad to worse, capping the climax with my Christmas party at Banaker House during my father's absence with my mother in Switzerland.

Resolved that my Christmas dinner should be a great success, I dressed early, and at seven hurried downstairs.

Entering the dining-room, I smiled delightedly.

Under an amber glow of candlelight the oval table, set for eight, was a white dream of beauty. The huge dessert uprose in the centre, a silver *épergne* of pears and peaches, pomegranates, apples, grapes; and from the dessert pale orchids, mingled with the mistletoe's waxen berries, curved in eight ropes over the cloth. On either side of the *épergne* stood enormous silver candelabra, the many candles of which the butler was experimentally lighting and extinguishing when I entered.

"It looks fine, Hewlett," I said.

"Thank you, sir," Hewlett answered. "It does make an 'andsome effect. At Lord Lacland's—"

"And you'll remember about the champagne, won't you?" I interrupted.

Hewlett from his candles shot at me a glance of such suspicion that I blushed. But I went on resolutely:

"Plenty of champagne, you know. Don't stop the champagne till I lead the way to the billiard-room for coffee."

"Yes, sir; quite right, sir; if, as you say, it's Mr. Banaker's orders—"

"Didn't I show you the letter giving me *carte blanche*?" I shouted. "What's the matter with you, man? Do you think I'm a forger?"

"Oh, no, sir," said Hewlett. He blew out a candle. Then he said, gently but very firmly, "Still, if you'll just let me 'ave that letter, sir—as a defence, you know—in case anything—"

"Damn it, here you are," said I; and, reluctantly handing him the forged letter, I descended to the kitchen of white, translucent tiles.

There, where Hattie had once ruled languidly, Alphonse Legros met me with a radiant smile. His cap and coat and apron were like snow. His pointed beard was black. His black eyes flashed with a soft light.

"Everything will be superb, Monsieur Brian," said Alphonse Legros, and he led me lightly and swiftly, despite his corpulence, to the elaborate dishes over which his young assistants bent. "The trout—divine. The turkey—exquisite. The plum pudding, the mince pies—"

But here Legros, remembering something, frowned.

"Monsieur Brian," he said gravely, "these young gentlemen will not drink too much wine! You will see to that, eh? Otherwise all our efforts—all our pains—"

He threw out his shapely hands and said in a tragic voice:

"Waste—waste."

"No, no," said I. "That will be all right." And I added, as I turned to go, "You do your part, chef, and we'll do ours."

I ascended to the blue drawing-room. Alfred Earle and Gilbert Allen were already down. They stood before the lovely Fragonard above the chimney-piece.

"Is this your famous Fragonard?"

"Yes," I answered. "It goes well, doesn't it, with the Louis Sixteenth furniture?"

Gilbert hesitated. "Yes," he said slowly. "These things are all new to me; but the chairs, the sofas, the queer carpet—"

"Queer? It's an Aubusson, you ass," said Alfred Earle.

"All these things," Gilbert resumed, "have a pale and delicate grace." He paused. "A pale and delicate, a stately grace. Not very homelike, though."

"Brian, why didn't you ask some girls?" said Alfred Earle.

"How could I ask girls?" I demanded, in an angry and wounded voice. "These servants here, God knows, are hard enough to manage without girls."

"Why didn't you ask Corbin Carson?" said Gilbert.

"Oh, that little fool!" I scoffed.

"He called at the office to see if I was invited," Gilbert resumed. "He said he couldn't understand why you had left him out. He almost filled up over it."

"Poor little devil," I mused. "I might have asked him, eh?"

My friends, one by one, sauntered down, their hands in their pockets. Soon all eight of us were assembled. We wore our very best tail coats, white waistcoats, pumps and black silk socks. We looked, we felt, elegant and distinguished, standing in little groups before the great chimney of delicately carved marble, before the long windows that looked out on the vast snowfields shimmering in the moonlight desolately.

We looked, we felt, exquisitely fresh and clean and pure, so that the debauch before us seemed almost a pity. But how otherwise could we create a Christmas spirit, a real Christmas spirit, for our Christmas feast?

Dinner was announced. We passed slowly through the vast red and the vast gold drawing-rooms. We seated ourselves in our huge chairs. I noted with pleasure that the footmen wore their knee-breeches and

silk stockings, and had their hair in powder, as for a gala.

With the tiny oysters a hock was served, and the dinner began, with gaiety and laughter, most auspiciously. The champagne came on with the Virginia ham. We were already heated and dry, and the icy wine was a delight. I, for my part, drained my glass at a gulp. Hewlett, to my satisfaction, was instantly at my side with a fresh bottle.

The dinner went well. Could dinner possibly go ill with every glass kept brim full of cold champagne from the first *plat* on to the very end? A hundred candles threw over us an amber radiance wherein we laughed and talked joyously. Between the courses, leaning back in our huge fauteuils, we put Egyptian cigarettes between our lips, a footman with a silver lighter passed from chair to chair, and, blowing clouds of aromatic smoke, we conversed in manly fashion.

But we paid little heed to the dinner itself. We ate all that was set before us, but we ate absently, hurriedly, in the midst of feverish laughter, in the midst of great gulps of divinely cold wine. Even the enormous turkey, with its truffled stuffing, passed unremarked; and, as the bird was relegated without a word of comment to the sideboard, I saw Alphonse Legros at the pantry door gesticulating dramatically his disappointment and rage.

Hewlett kept his promise, the champagne flowed like water, and, by the time the plum-pudding came on, we were all in a daze of happiness. Billy Wilkins rose, his glass uplifted elegantly, to propose the health of my father and mother; but my guests began to throw at him from the *épergne* apples and peaches and pears; big John Murray seized him by the coat-tails and pulled

him down upon his knee; the *épergne* toppled over, shattering a dozen glasses and plates; and I led the way to the billiard-room amid a gale of laughter.

In the spacious billiard-room the athletes and acrobats among our party, overflowing with alcoholic energy and joy, began to box and wrestle. Dick Field walked on his hands across the billiard table, threw from the cushions a hand-spring that brought him lightly down upon his feet, and then whirled round and round the room in a succession of cartwheels and aerial somersaults. Alfred Earle and George Douglas were boxing fiercely. Mark Fisher had thrown Gilbert Allen, and sat on the reporter's bosom.

The butler's frowning face in the doorway startled me, and I cried:

"Come, get your coffee, all hands!"

My friends abandoned their horseplay and seated themselves, breathless and dishevelled, about the tray. Billy Wilkins, it seemed, had already disappeared.

The coffee sobered us, but the liqueurs served with the coffee counterbalanced this sobering effect, and soon, to my dismay and sorrow, the wild horseplay began afresh.

Unutterably disgusted, I arose. This was not the evening I had expected. I had expected an evening of decorous and elegant converse, converse stimulated and kept sparkling by an occasional brandy and soda, converse about books, clothes, plays, religion. But this—

I looked at my guests. They were like so many schoolboys. "Hell and damnation!" I said bitterly. And filling my coffee cup with Benedictine, I drained the sweet, thick drink at a gulp.

My head cleared instantly of its cobwebs and ill hu-

mours. The horseplay of my friends seemed no longer uncouth and silly. Seizing a syphon, I darted this way and that, spraying face after face with soda-water.

But those strenuous antics tired us soon. They gave us, in fact, slight headaches. Sobered greatly, we fell, some to cards, some to talk before the fire. A second disappearance, that of Alfred Earle, was noted.

The hour was nearly midnight. Gilbert Allen and I sat at a little table before the billiard-room fire, the rest being at poker, when Hewlett bent over me and said reproachfully:

"Excuse me, sir, but Mr. Earle has just driven up with a young lady. I can't let her in, sir."

"No; of course not," said I. "Throw out the pair of them." And I resumed my discussion of Hans Andersen.

"But the point is, sir, they refuse to go. We don't want a scene, sir, do we?"

"Damn them!" I said angrily, and I rose. "I'll settle this myself."

As I approached the hall, I heard angry male voices mingled with the light, fresh note of a girl's voice, and rage flamed up in my breast against Alfred Earle who, despite his promise, had brought some vulgar woman to Banaker House like this.

It was dark in the hall. Some cedar logs, pink through their crust of grey ash, smouldered in the grate. Flickering lights ran over the walls and floor of marble, over the gilt carvings of the enormous chairs and tables, over the tapestries that swayed a little in the wind.

The tapestries swayed a little in the wind, for the bronze doors stood open, and without dreamed the night,

the blue night, vitreous and faintly splendid. Snow covered the terrace and the distant lawns. Moonlight dreamed on the desolate snow. A few stars glittered feebly in a pale sky.

Of a sudden the great bronze chandelier flashed up, and my eyes met Christine's.

Christine's eyes were brown, but her hair was a bright gold. She was pretty: a slim girl of eighteen, with an oval face, a little, straight nose, and a mouth like a flower.

Her eyes held mine. They said beautiful things to me, strange, vague, lovely things, such as one hears in music.

"Come, miss, you'll have to go. We can't keep the door open all night, really."

She laughed like a bad child. She came a step or two towards me. "Make him let me stay," she said.

"You may stay," said I, shivering with cold, and I walked back to the billiard-room in a dream.

"Well, did you turn her out?" said Gilbert Allen.

"No," said I. I put my glass to my lips. But brandy drinking seemed a foul, base thing beside my dream.

"Why not?" Gilbert asked.

"She is too pretty to turn out," I said.

"I must go and have a look at her," said he.

He strode away. Left alone, I hugged my dream and gazed into the fire. Alcohol—Bah!

"I don't think much of her," Gilbert said on his return.

"Who is she?" said I.

"She is a member of a theatrical company that is stranded in the town. Her name is Christine."

"Christine what?"

"I don't know. Just Christine."

"What is she doing now?"

"She is sitting on Earle's knee with a cocktail and a cigarette."

I frowned. I began to drink again. With knit brows I gazed into the flame. Suddenly we heard a burst of laughter, and Christine, followed by Alfred Earle, ran into the room, dressed in one of my lounge suits. The suit was too big for her; the coat sleeves were turned up, the trouser ends were turned up six inches or more; yet, somehow, she looked charming.

All my friends crowded round her. She stood in their midst, laughing, answering their compliments gaily.

"Lift me up," I heard her say. And, her hands on Earle's shoulders, she climbed on to the billiard table. Thence, smiling, she regarded me.

"Now a cigarette and a drink," she said.

A brandy and soda was handed her, she lighted her cigarette from the tip of Gilbert's, and stood erect again, flushed, bright-eyed, smiling like a bad child, her gilt hair a little roughened.

"A toast," she said, and she pushed back her hair, she raised her glass high. "A toast—to my rude host—who is going to turn me out."

There was an uproar. I was seized and pummelled jovially. Then my assailants returned to the billiard table, and in the silence, in answer to her tender and yet mocking smile, I said:

"I could never turn you out."

At this, putting her heels together, she made me a military salute, stiff and grave and quick.

"Dance for us!" cried Gilbert Allen.

"No," she said shortly. "There's no music. Here, help me down, somebody."

Her hands on Earle's shoulders again, she leapt lightly to the floor, and they departed together, Earle's arm round her waist.

We others continued to drink. Here and there among us a reveller slept. The alcohol and tobacco were beginning to sicken us. We knew well we had had enough. Nevertheless we hated to stop and go to bed.

As I brooded before the fire, a hand touched my shoulder, a cloud of hair brushed my cheek, and Christine said:

"I'm going now. Good-night."

"Good-night," said I.

I looked up at her sadly from my chair. She smiled, and, bending down, she kissed me lightly and carelessly, then ran from the room.

"Good-night, Brian, dear."

The kiss, I knew, meant nothing to her. But to me it was a voice, a sweet, imperious voice, calling me from the morass up to the sunlit peaks.

Who would deny this voice? To deny this clear and lovely voice seemed an unpardonable sin, an unthinkable sin, like the murder of a beautiful, laughing child.

IX

“**H**E is insane!” cried my mother.
“I’m as sane as you are, and well you
know it.”

“Keep cool!” my father shouted.

In the dusk we occupied, my father and mother and I, the library where my grandfather, with his great bulk, his crutch and long white beard, had passed the quiet evening of his life in war studies. My grandfather’s desk of marquetry and sculptured bronze, covered once with war papers, covered anon with interlinears and cribs and keys, was covered now with the accounts (doctored by Hewlett) of my forbidden Christmas party—five cases of champagne, four boxes of Corona y Coronas, a fruit bill of two hundred dollars, a hole burnt in the silk Gobelins seat of an armchair, etc.

“It was an insane act to give Hewlett this forged letter,” said my father mildly.

In silence I looked out of the window. The western sky was a strange, soft red. Cold blue shadows lay on the snow. The trees’ bare boughs were uplifted wistfully in delicate and weird black lines against a liquid light.

“Why did you give him this forged letter?” said my father.

“Oh, you know why!”

“He is insane!” cried my mother. “George, we’ll have to put him away!”

Hatred poisoned my mother's voice, and a like hatred poisoned my own voice as I shouted:

"Don't dare to call me insane again! I won't stand it, do you hear?"

When my father raged, my mother took my part; and in like manner, when my mother raged, my father would adopt a mild and patient tone. He now said:

"Do let us keep cool. Remember, Brian, for your mother and me this is a first experience in raising a son, just as for you it's a first experience in growing up. We are apt, all three of us, to make mistakes."

"I know I make mistakes enough," I admitted ruefully.

"Then will you try to stop making them?"

"Yes," I said; "yes, I'll try."

A reconciliation scene ensued—tears and an embrace on my mother's part, a virile handshake between my father and me—and so I was not punished for my riotous Christmas party.

In gratitude to my parents for their generosity, I turned over a new leaf, finishing my junior and senior years a model of temperance and industry. Again, as of old, my father beamed on me affectionately, though there was always in his eyes when they sought mine a certain pathetic anxiety—that pathetic anxiety which unstable souls like me bring to the eyes of those who love them.

• • • • •

Christine's memory, amid my temperance and industry, grew faint. I had questioned Alfred Earle about her, but Earle, usually too loquacious in such matters, frowned and would say little here. What I gathered,

ere he hurriedly changed the subject, was that Christine had abused, had deceived him. She had permitted him, in fact, to ransom her luggage at the Banakerburg Hotel, and then, breaking her promise to rejoin him in the bar, she had flitted to New York by the last train.

And now, alas, amid my temperance and industry, the lagging consequences of many a past misdeed began to overtake me. One by one they crashed, like bricks, against my temperate and industrious head.

Thus I heard Alfred Earle invite, one October afternoon, big John Murray, Peter Corbin Carson, 3rd, Vaux Vaughan and half-a-dozen other cronies to go down to New York for Saturday's game and spend Sunday at his mother's house in Washington Square.

"Am I in on this?" I asked gaily, coming from the curtained alcove where I had been writing an essay on Pindar.

"Er—no—that is—I'll explain later," Alfred stammered.

Conscious, in the silence that ensued, of my friends' glances of amused, embarrassed pity, I muttered, "I was only joking, damn you," and returned to my essay in the alcove.

As I stared moodily at the manuscript, Alfred lifted the curtain.

"You see," he said, advancing to my side, "it's your reputation. You do everything so openly."

"Oh, dry up," said I.

"No," he persisted, and he laid his friendly hand on my shoulder. "No, I want to explain. My mother has heard something—I don't know just what—and she says you're not to come to the house any more—on account of my sisters, you know. But I——"

"Oh, dry up," I interrupted, and I laughed bitterly.
"I don't care," I said.

"I knew you wouldn't care," said Alfred Earle.

I took up my magazine again. Then I laid it down. My head ached and spun from the impact of Earle's brick.

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At the Thanksgiving game, as treasurer of the athletic association, I was admitted to the side lines—a superb opportunity for showing off.

The November afternoon was cold and still. The November sun slanted through the misty air its scintillant, orange-coloured rays. From the flat, green oval, dotted with tiny figures, rose the crowded amphitheatre's thousands, a dark mass whereon flags waved, furs shimmered, and here and there, like a flower, a beautiful face stood out.

In her corsage every girl wore great, shaggy chrysanthemums. The men wore great shaggy chrysanthemums in their buttonholes. And the players' heads, with the hair left inordinately long, were like great, shaggy chrysanthemums, too.

I stood, at the end of the first half, conversing with Dick Field, our full-back, who had been ruled off for biting.

A little old man, dapper and thin, hurried towards us. In his manner there was something strange.

"That's Corbin Carson's grandfather," said Dick Field. "Have you heard about Corbin? They say he's been stealing money, and now the smash has come, and he's run off."

"I knew Corbin had been going the pace," said I.

The old man continued to advance. He halted before us. I remarked that he was trembling violently.

"Which is Banaker? Are you Banaker?" he said.

"Yes, I am Banaker," said I.

The old man spluttered:

"I've a good mind to cane you, sir! You young—you young——"

"What is the matter with you?" said I. "There's some mistake."

"Mistake indeed! There's no mistake whatever. You've ruined my grandson—led the boy astray."

"Me!" I cried. "Why, I haven't seen your grandson for a year."

"None of your lies, sir," said the old man. "I know you, with your damned extravagance and dissipation. It was nothing but Banaker this and Banaker that with him all day long. And now, in emulating Banaker, he's come—come—Bah, you puppy!"

His voice rose in a thin squeak. Tremulously he lifted his heavy stick. But he was already tired from his tirade. He did not really want, perhaps, to strike. Another old man, stepping forth from the crowd of alumni and reporters, without difficulty led him away.

I, too, walked away, hurrying, with bowed head, down the track, all eyes upon me. Another brick had crashed home, and in my elegant new clothes, with my stick and cigarette and shaggy yellow chrysanthemum, I slunk off to my rooms in Haakon Hall.

I approached my final examinations with confidence. And I passed *magna cum laude*. Among our hundred graduates I ranked among the first.

The ceremonies of graduation concluded with a ball,

the traditional "acorn ball," to which my father and mother and a gay party came in the "Banakeria."

The evening of the "acorn ball," my mother gave a dinner in my honour in our car.

I sat beside Mrs. Tillinghast Corcoran, who frightened me. She was pretty and bold, a tall young woman of thirty, and from the beginning she singled me out—in a spirit of mockery, I bitterly believed, for how could such a fine young woman become suddenly enamoured of a bashful lad like me?

And now Mrs. Corcoran would press her white shoulder against my arm. Now her knee beneath the table touched mine, withdrew, then returned and touched mine gently again. Now she leaned across me to speak to my uncle, Count Martelli, and all the warm fragrance of her bosom floated up into my face.

But I was frightened and vexed. It was plain to me that she suspected, that she desired to make game of, my incredible ignorance. So I treated her very coldly and haughtily indeed.

She smiled, shrugged, and began to respond to the warm advances of my uncle. Between them an over-gay, over-ostentatious flirtation began.

But now and then, in the midst of his flirtation, my uncle's gallant smile would change to a scowl, and in silence he would glare across the table at my aunt, flirting in her turn with Jeremiah Ludlow. And sometimes my aunt, forgetting her own flirtation, would scowl in silence at the flirtation of my uncle. As for old Tillinghast, he pretended to see nothing; but, the more his young bride flirted, the more he flirted with the wine.

"Brian," said my mother, "they tell me Mary Rutherford will be at the ball. Mary Rutherford! I haven't

seen her since her marriage twenty years ago. And she's got her daughter with her—Sibyl! What fun it will be to introduce Sibyl and you! Think, Brian, the last time we met, Mary and I were girls."

I looked at my tall and splendid mother with pride.
"You," I said, "are prettier than most girls now."

"Ah, no," said my mother; "men's eyes tell me better than that."

I frowned. I was shocked that my mother should concern herself with the eyes of men. Uncle Rosalino too, was frowning, and, when I looked quickly at my aunt, I saw that she was frowning in her turn. And old Tillinghast Corcoran frowned even as he tossed off a great, hissing goblet of champagne.

Our frowns were all alike. They were the frowns of proprietors who are displeased because unable to regulate their human property's least thought.

The acorn ball, on our arrival at eleven, was very elegant and gay. From a pale, domed ceiling, where nude goddesses reclined on rosy clouds, great chandeliers of crystal threw a splendid light upon the ivory and gold ball-room thronged with white-clad girls. Girls dominated the ball-room. Amid the music and the perfume and the glitter they seemed intoxicated. Their cheeks were flushed, their bright hair was a little ruffled, they breathed with parted lips, and their clear eyes were full of dreams and fire. How lovely the white, translucent contours of their slender arms and bosoms! And, as their pale skirts swung out in the waltz, or as they sat between the dances with crossed knees, how lovely their long and delicate limbs in stockings of pale silk!

On my way through the smoking-room I came upon Gilbert Allen, in a brown tweed suit and brown boots,

bent over a sheaf of manila paper, "covering" the acorn ball for his newspaper.

"So you've got your A.B.," said Gilbert Allen.

"Yes. Do you wish you had got yours, too?"

"No. It wouldn't help me to write. That's all I live for, to write."

My mother appeared in the smoking-room door.

"Come, Brian," she said. "Jerry has found Mary Rutherford."

I accompanied my mother across the pale foyer filled with white, soft throngs of girls.

"There she is!" my mother cried.

Mrs. Rutherford sat on a gilt sofa in a palm-sheltered nook. Her daughter stood beside her amid a group of half-a-dozen men. The girl was tall and blonde and fair in her white gown; the men bent before her in attitudes of gallantry and devotion.

"Mary!" cried my mother, and she laid her hands on Mrs. Rutherford's erect shoulders, and kissed her calm cheek. "After twenty years! But you haven't changed, dear."

"You haven't changed, either," said Mrs. Rutherford.

I stood beside her daughter, who regarded me with a faint and friendly smile. But Mrs. Rutherford raised a gold lorgnette and gave me a long, cold stare. Then, in a low, hurried, perfectly calm voice, she murmured something in my mother's ear.

My mother started. She laughed a shrill, unpleasant laugh.

"Then, of course," she said, "I shan't introduce him." She turned to me. "Come, Brian."

Arm-in-arm we walked hurriedly away.

"My son, forsooth!" my mother said. "My son unfit to meet her daughter!"

My mother gave me an odd, bitter look.

"So you had girls, eh, at your Christmas party!"

"No," I said. "No, I hadn't, mother. It's a lie."

My mother dabbed her eyes with a little lace handkerchief—a hurried, shamefaced, pitiful gesture.

Another brick—but this time it was my mother's proud and innocent head on which it fell.



BOOK III

I

THE January afternoon was cold and bright and still. The crystal air exhilarated like wine. A crowd of glittering equipages hurried in the sunshine up and down the avenue, and from left and right the shop windows flashed, under a sky of pure and luminous blue, the splendour of their furs and diamonds, silk stuffs and ivory carvings, tapestries and gold.

Swinging my stick I strode northward buoyantly. I wore the dark, rich dress that London prescribed; but the other men in Fifth Avenue were dressed with a crude gaiety, dressed as for Monte Carlo, as for a country walk, as for a dog fight. I sneered at their provincialism.

Now and then a beautiful girl, her profile cut with delicate brilliance against the black of a brougham's depths, gave me a cold nod (for my depravity was notorious) and I lifted my top hat. Over the pearls and rubies in the shop windows, like humming-birds over flowers, other beautiful girls hung dreamily. I walked in an endless stream of beautiful girls. Their clear, deep eyes, as we passed, looked into mine with a tender gaiety, a tender regret, seeming to say, "Ah, if we but knew one another! Why can't we know one another?"

All those beautiful and gay and wistful eyes, all those

fresh and lovely faces, all those shapes supple and elegant, began to trouble me. My mood grew bitter. I brooded bitterly on my ignorance of woman.

And I remembered how, one by one, my friends had doffed their ignorance. The thing had always happened secretly. For years, before the fire in Nu Gamma, these friends had listened in silent embarrassment to the amours of Alfred Earle, and at the end they had changed the subject hurriedly. Then, on another evening, without any warning, one of my friends had begun at the conclusion of an amour of Alfred's to narrate an amour of his own. He narrated it with feigned carelessness, as though it were his ninetieth or his hundredth amour, and exactly in Alfred's manner, exactly in the correct and conventional manner, the callow lad lied like a trooper, giving to himself the rôle of cynical rake, giving to his paramour, a courtesan no doubt of vast experience, the shrinking, frightened rôle that had really been his own. But the gist, the germ, of his tale was true, and as I listened I thought with heavy heart, "He, too." And I grew lonely and sad, as at the death of a dear friend.

While I mused the sun sank, the air became blue, and each numbered street revealed as I crossed it a sunset sky all pink and gold, all breathless and translucent.

I remembered the gibes under which I had long writhed. A scene with Uncle Charles came vividly before me. Uncle Charles, over a bottle of whiskey, said one night, "Have you got a girl, Brian?" I squirmed. "Er—no," I answered. "Why, hell," said Uncle Charles, "when I was your age I had three girls." "Not simultaneously!" "Yes, by jingo, simultaneously."

In truth the thing must end. It must end at once. Not to end it was cowardly, as cowardly as to shirk a fight. Nature, furthermore, commanded me to end it. A longing to end it continually tormented me: a sweet, delicious longing, which yet turned my whole being to a hot, horrible sore.

But in a woman's presence this longing vanished, to be succeeded by fear.

I gained the park. The park, in the wistful winter twilight, lay cold and desolate. Cold the scene, wistful and cold, a song of winter. Here and there on the grey slopes mantles of snow, thin and torn, gave forth a faint, cold glimmer. The denuded trees looked frozen. And a sunset sky of liquid green shone icy clear behind a black, weird arabesque of bare boughs.

"Hello, dear."

A pretty girl halted at my side.

"Hello, dear," she repeated.

But with a muttered excuse I hastened away, cursing my cowardice bitterly.

Chesterton, when I got home (we had taken the Sheridan town house for the season), laid out my evening clothes—my heavy shirt with its two small pearls, my fresh white waistcoat and tie and gloves. I dressed carefully. I went downstairs with a delicious sense of purity and elegance and vigour. Soon, undoubtedly, I would end it.

My father sat before the fire in the hall alone, for my mother was spending the winter at the Palazzo Martelli with my aunt.

"Are you going out to-night?" my father asked anxiously.

"Yes; I'm going to the Bellevue dance," I answered.

"Good! The Bellevues are very nice people, an old Philadelphia family, lineal descendants of Charlemagne."

"Are you going out, too, father?"

"No. Ludlow and Corcoran are dining here. We'll spend the evening over business."

"You are becoming a great business man, father."

"Well, my boy, I've increased our income forty per cent. in the last three years."

"You've abandoned your literary work altogether, haven't you?"

"Pooh, 'literary work'! A few silly stories."

At dinner, bored by the thought of the Bellevue dance, I drank so much wine that my father, in the midst of his business talk, glanced at me anxiously.

His business talk concerned the sale of certain Banafer real estate holdings down town. My father opposed this sale: his three friends urged it. The argument was still in progress when, as the dessert came on, I rose.

"Off so soon?" said my father, and from his chair he took my hand as I passed forth and smiled up at me affectionately.

"Yes," I replied; "I think I'll hear an act of a musical comedy before the dance."

"He's got a girl, I expect," said Jeremiah Ludlow, lighting a long cigar. Save for a touch of grey in his crisp hair, Jeremiah had changed little. He was superb to-night in a New York evening coat with a velvet collar and velvet cuffs. "He's got a girl waiting somewhere, I expect."

"No, no; not he," said my father, though, as he spoke,

he glanced up at me anxiously again. "No, no; Brian's got no girl."

"Time he had, then." And Tillinghast Corcoran, whose ruddy colour, clear eyes and thick, slightly curling silver hair gave to his sixty years a strange gaiety, a strange charm—Tillinghast Corcoran laughed his rich laugh and added in his rich voice, "Why, when I was his age—"

But I had already escaped. I entered my hansom, I rode in the cold, still, starry weather down the long vista of Fifth Avenue, and at the Abercrombie Knickerbocker Colonial Theatre I descended.

A mistake. For at the Abercrombie Knickerbocker Colonial the musical comedy of *The Chorus Girl* was on its last legs. Poor old Jake Abercrombie had had another failure.

The first act of *The Chorus Girl* was nearly over, and, in my seat in the front row, I had reached down for my hat in disgust, when—

Christine, to a fanfare of trumpets, ran out upon the stage.

Ah, how beautiful she was! Her skirt hardly reached her knees. Her arms and bosom were bare. She bowed low to the applause; her rosy lips, parting in a smile, revealed the snow of her teeth; and her bodice, as she bent forward, showed her girlish breasts.

She sang in her thin voice a song that began—

Bon jour, bon jour, monsieur,
What did you take me for?
You took me out to take me in—
That's what you took me for!

Her voice was thin, but she sang with a dainty, wicked grace. And the women in the audience smiled their del-

icate appreciation of her art, while the business men crowded with boyish delight, wriggled in their seats, and nudged one another in the ribs.

Between the stanzas she danced. How beautiful her dancing! The music was like a wind wherein she swayed and floated. It grew louder, wilder. She was flung riotously hither and yon.

"Does she remember me?" I thought. And, as if in answer, her eyes met mine, they lingered in mine, and she smiled breathlessly, with parted lips.

And now, alas, my heart beat hard, my hands began to shake, and tremors ran down my arms and legs and back. For suddenly I had perceived that it was my duty to accost her; I must accost her; and terror swallowed up all the delight of her beauty, all the delight of her remembered kiss.

With slow, dragging steps, on legs that seemed to have turned to lead, I went round to the stage door at the end of the act and sent my card in to Christine.

"Wait outside," said the gruff doorman.

"All right," I answered huskily.

After two or three minutes of waiting outside the door opened again, and I was led into a kind of lofty, dingy cellar. The cellar had a smell of dust and mould; shabby scenery was piled in it like lumber in a lumber yard; and here and there girls in white ballet dress stood in graceful poses, their arms round one another's shoulders. They gave me, as I passed, calm, frank, pleasant smiles. Then they resumed their gentle conversation.

I mounted a steep and narrow stair like the stair of an attic. I passed a huge dressing-room whence fresh, sweet laughter sounded. I came to a little door ticketed "Miss Savage."

"There y'are," said the boy.

My heart beating as if to burst my stiff white shirt-bosom, I knocked. "Come in!" And I moistened my dry lips and entered.

Christine sat before her little dressing-table, her supple body bent round to face the door.

"Hello, Brian, dear!"

And she rose and extended her hand and came swiftly forward in her kimono of green silk, which she held together at the waist. Her unbound hair fell over her bare shoulders, a soft, thick, bright mass, moving a little with her movements.

I breathed with difficulty. "Do you—remember me?" I panted.

"Why, of course I do!" She took the one armchair, and nodded towards the chair which she had just left. "Sit down," she said, and she leaned back and crossed her knees. "But give me a cigarette first." I handed her my gold case. "Now a light." And I struck a match and held it for her. "How your hand shakes! Are you nervous, dear?"

"No. Why should I be nervous?"

I seated myself astraddle of the little chair, folding my arms across the rail. My hat, which I kept on, was tilted rakishly back. My cigarette in its long tube slanted upward from my lips. Mine, I hoped, was the proper pose, the classical pose, of a young millionaire in a beautiful actress's dressing-room.

"How beautiful your hair is," I said.

Lifting a tress upon her finger, she gazed at the lights which ran back and forth over its surface.

"I'm glad you like it," she said simply, letting the tress fall.

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In the silence I rubbed my brain for another remark.
An answer I brought forth:

"I don't think you'd remember me."

"Why shouldn't I remember you?" said Christine
curiously. "You remembered me."

"Hm." And I gave a harsh laugh.

"What are you laughing at?"

"You know well enough," I answered. "Of course
I remember you. But for a girl like you to remem-
ber me—"

She smiled at this. She seemed pleased. And her air
of hard, indifferent gaiety, almost professional gaiety,
changed to an air of real friendliness. "How old are
you, Brian?"

"Twenty. How old are you?"

"Nineteen."

"You have seen a lot for a girl of nineteen, haven't
you?"

From her pretty lips Christine blew forth a stream of
smoke, and as the smoke swirled upward she gazed at
me with a smile, a wise, superior and mysterious smile.
"I know a thing or two," she said. And then, wrinkling
her pretty nose, she summed up her knowledge scorn-
fully. "Pooh, men are all alike."

"How do you mean, 'all alike'?"

At this, overcome no doubt by some ludicrous mem-
ory, she burst into a laugh. "Oh, you men!" she said.
And she regarded me gaily, tenderly, mischievously.
Her body in the huge chair was like a white flower.
Through the rose of her parted lips I saw the snow of
her teeth. Her beautiful eyes had a dewy freshness.
They called me—called me—

But at the same time I was afraid.

"You used to be a good boy," said Christine. "You are a young devil now."

"Oh, no," said I, and I grew hot and uncomfortable. I tilted my hat to a more rakish angle; I was ashamed and yet gratified. "Oh, no."

"Yes, you are. Any one could see it."

And as she lay back in her chair, her knee flung across the arm, her foot in its silk shoe swinging to and fro, she gave me out of half-closed eyes a look so significant that I rose in horror.

"I must go," I gasped. "I'm going to a dance." And I stood before her, holding out my hand.

But she frowned. She ignored my hand. "Oh, I thought you'd take me to supper somewhere."

"I wish I could. But this dance—"

"There's plenty of time for your dance."

"Well," I faltered, "well, if you think so—"

"Oh, yes!" she cried. "I'll get ready at once."

She rose, flung off her green kimono, and began to flit about the room in gossamer garments as light and soft as foam.

"I'm only on in the first act," she said. "Drat the old show! I'm glad it's done for."

"I liked your dance," I said.

"I love dancing," said Christine.

And she slipped a black gown over her head. With uplifted hands she adjusted the angle of her hat.

At the restaurant she made a sensation. Silence fell upon the lofty foyer of amber-coloured onyx, and a host of unshaven business men stared at her open-mouthed.

It was delightful, in the restaurant, to face her across the small white table, with its flowers and pink-shaded candles, its wine and delicate food. Her gilt hair glit-

tered, gilt sparks shone in the depths of her brown eyes, her complexion was like roses and lilies. "Are you rich?" she asked, drinking off a glass of champagne.

"No, I have nothing."

But Christine was smiling and shaking a roguish forefinger at some one behind her whom I could not see.

"What?" she said.

"I have nothing," I repeated.

"Just an allowance?"

"Yes."

"Well, I wish I had an al— Oh, hello, Mr. McBride!"

A showy fat man of fifty-three bent over Christine's hand, murmuring something that I did not hear.

"Now, Mr. McBride, come off!" said the young girl, with a pleased smile. "Mr. McBride, I want you to shake hands with Mr. Banaker."

Mr. McBride and I shook hands.

"I know your father, Mr. Banaker," said he. "I hope to persuade him to build me a theatre on one of his Broadway holdings. But your father is so engrossed in mines just now—"

"Yes," said I, "he's selling off his real estate."

"Bad business," said Mr. McBride. "However—"

With a shrug he turned to Christine. "Little girl, treat this young man right. He comes of good stock."

"Trust me, Mr. McBride."

Then, as the fat man tripped away with the erect carriage, the light, jaunty step of the fat, she called after him:

"Give my love to Mrs. McBride!"

Christine ate a great deal and drank a great deal, and her manner of eating and drinking was more eccentric

than I had ever seen. She made pretty gestures with knife and fork. To emphasize a remark she rapped me on the knuckles with a spoon. After her third glass of champagne she hiccupped a little without appearing to notice it, and, instead of using her serviette, she wiped the wine hurriedly from her lips with the back of her hand.

"Come," she said, rising suddenly, "let's be going. I want a cigarette."

"I'll put you in a hansom," I faltered.

I put her in a hansom before the hotel. Then, from the side-walk, I gave her my hand in farewell. But she would not relinquish my hand. Instead she pulled upon it vigorously.

"Come!" she cried. "Come, get in!"

And there, under the brilliant light of the *porte-cochère*, my arm disappeared up to the elbow in the hansom as in some great black maw. I tugged vainly to withdraw it.

"No," I said. "This dance——"

"Oh, drat your old dance!"

And Christine, laughing heartily, pulled on my arm with might and main. I, since there were idlers about, resisted in a stately and dignified manner. She, on the contrary, bracing her pretty feet, pulled with both hands, as in a tug-of-war, and took no thought of state or dignity.

"In you come!" she panted.

A burst of laughter sounded behind me, and I yielded.

"Hang you, Christine," I muttered, hastening to seat myself at her side.

But Christine put her soft, warm hand over my mouth, and she poked up the little roof-lid and gave the driver

her address. Then she drew my cigarette-case from my pocket, put a cigarette between her lips, and lighted it from my own.

"There," she said, nestling beside me. "Isn't this nicer than your old dance?"

"Yes," I whispered.

She regarded me with grave eyes. As she puffed her cigarette, an amber light, as of a fairy lamp, illumined her face delicately. Her face was grave and tender. She took the cigarette from her lips and bent towards me.

"Kiss——" she breathed. "Kiss——"

She kissed me. I was enveloped in the warm and perfumed radiance of her beauty. Then, with a little laugh, she drew back into the corner of the hansom, whence she regarded me roguishly, mischievously. She smoked on. The light of her cigarette, rising and falling, sent waves of translucent amber over her demure face.

"That wasn't our first kiss," I said.

"When did I ever kiss you before?"

"You have forgotten our first kiss," I said sadly, "and you'll forget this one, too."

"Oh, well, what's a kiss?" She smoked in moody silence a little while. "Men are all alike." Then, drawing near me anew, putting her fresh mouth close to mine, she murmured, with low laughter, "What's a kiss?"

And again she kissed me, and again I was enveloped in a warm and perfumed radiance.

I sat back in my corner, dazed. Through the cold and starry night the hansom glided. And Christine, from the other corner, her face now in shadow and now bathed in amber light, regarded me demurely, studying

my emotion, which her beauty had caused, with a kind of tender and mischievous pride.

The hansom drew up before a new apartment house. We ascended to the twelfth floor. Christine, taking a key from her bag, led me into a small, new flat.

"Isn't this nice?" she said.

And she displayed her parquetry floors, her bright rugs, her shiny tables. She displayed her white bathroom and her blue bedroom. She displayed the gilded futilities of her little drawing-room.

"Isn't it nice?" she repeated, and, before a gilt mirror, she took off her hat and ran her white hand deftly through her soft and glittering hair.

"What shall we do?" she said. "Shall we have a drink?"

"Yes," said I.

And soon there stood on a gilt table before our gilt sofa a bottle of cognac, a syphon, a silver box of cigarettes, and two hissing, foaming glasses.

"Here's to the downfall of *The Chorus Girl*," said Christine.

"But you're out of work now, aren't you?"

"Oh, that's all right." Seated at my side, she faced me in a cross-legged attitude, her feet hidden beneath her, like a Turk. "That's all right. I can get in Jimmy McBride's show just as soon as—" She blew forth a cloud of smoke, and gave me a significant look. "Brr!" A shudder passed darkly over her young face. "I don't like Jimmy."

And she began to talk cynically about men. I, to maintain her respect, talked cynically about women, thus upholding my reputation as a libertine.

"You are young, but you know a lot," said Christine, impressed.

With a self-conscious air I blew forth a cloud of smoke. I sipped my brandy and soda. Thus, alas, my silence passed for assent.

But the clock struck twelve, and she cried:

"Oh, you'd better go!"

"Very well," said I; and I rose and passed out into the little hall, followed by Christine.

"Come again," she said, in a cold, hurt voice, as I put on my overcoat.

"Yes, thanks." I took my hat from its hook. I held out my hand.

"Good night, dear Christine."

"Good night."

We clasped hands. We stood, with clasped hands, in silence. I looked down into her beautiful face. The red mouth drooped. The pale lids hid the beautiful eyes. But slowly the pale lids lifted. The beautiful eyes gazed with reproach into mine.

"Don't go," she whispered.

"Yes," I said weakly. "I must."

"You don't like me, do you?"

"I adore you."

"Then—then why—"

But how could I stay? How, after my lying boasts, could I now stay?

"Dear," I blurted suddenly, "I'm ashamed to stay. You think I'm such a rake—I pretended to be such a rake—but the truth is—I've never kissed any one but you."

She looked at me in stupefaction. I smiled miserably.

"Think of it," I said. "Never. Isn't it ridiculous?" Thus I threw myself upon her mercy. And I expected her to scorn me for my strange confession, to scorn me as I scorned myself.

But the look of astonished incredulity vanished from her face, and, laughing softly, she extended her fresh arms, she offered her fresh lips.

Ah, her lips' fragrance, as of wild strawberries, as of woodland violets!

II

THE January morning was grey and very cold. A bitter wind swept the avenue. Whirlpools of grey dust, mingled with newspaper fragments, lazily revolved, breast high, at every corner. But at intervals the wind became a wild blast, the whirlpools rose and scattered like explosions, and all the newspaper fragments went fluttering far and wide, like crazy, filthy birds, down the grey sky.

I leaned back on the cushions of the hansom, drawing my fur-lined coat about me to hide my evening dress. I seemed, the world seemed, after last night, to live and move in a soft, a languid dream. Now and then a few snowflakes struck against my face. They were cool and refreshing.

But the morning was very cold. Streaks of dry snow lay here and there. With bodies hunched, brows knit, lips compressed, the people hurried. The purple faces of cabmen and teamsters had a grim, resigned look.

Shivering, I took out my watch. Ten o'clock. A hard task lay before me. I must enter the house unremarked in my evening dress, I must account for my night's absence, and I must get from my father a good round sum of money for our Bermuda trip. A hard task.

Yet the task did not trouble me. I did not, indeed, once set my mind to it. My mind, in a golden haze, dwelt on Christine alone.

The hansom halted, and I hurried indoors with my overcoat buttoned tight over my white shirt bosom and white tie. But the two men-servants in the hall smiled as I sped past them, and I had hardly gained my room when my father entered.

"Where were you last night?"

The question, though expected, took me altogether by surprise. Enrapt in a soft splendour of memories, I had not thought of preparing a lie.

"Where were you last night?"

"I went to the Bellevue dance," I faltered, "and—
and, after that——"

"You didn't go to the Bellevue dance."

"No," I said; "I didn't."

"You lie badly," said my father. "It is easy to see
that you are not used to lying."

"Father," I said, "I lie oftener than you think."

"Why do you tell me that?"

"Because I hate to be a hypocrite. You always say
I never lie. Well, I lie as much as anybody."

My father shook his head. "You never stayed away
all night before."

"No," I said. "No; but—but I——"

"I know where you were!" my father cried.

Aha, he knew. Then, since he knew, there was no
need of lying. But I was sorry he knew.

"Father," I said, "I want to go to Bermuda. Will
you let me have a little money, an advance?"

"My worst fears are true! You want to go to Ber-
muda with a worthless woman! You spent last night
with some worthless woman!"

He had not known, then. He had pretended to know
in order to trap me. In my anger I said defiantly:

"Well, am I to have the money or not? I sail today."

Stupefied, he started. Then rage seized him, and he advanced upon me with uplifted hand.

"You foul-mouthed scoundrel! You don't deny it, eh? You, at your age! Get out of my sight, or——"

But I smiled at the folly of his uplifted hand, and he struck me across the cheek.

"The first time!" I shouted; and I rushed distractedly, helplessly, up and down, to and fro. "Oh, I feel polluted!"

My father regarded with a sneer my crazy march. Then he made a wry face, as though confronted with a bad smell. "Phew!" he said. "Disgusting!" And he strode from the room.

I began to dress. And as I bathed, as I put on crisp linen, and lustrous boots fresh from their forms, and a suit of soft, rich blue, I likened last night with Christine to this morning with my father. I felt that last night was beautiful. I felt that this morning was vile. And I thought of the delicate and poetical happiness that I had drawn from Christine's clear eyes, from her fresh mouth—yet that was wicked, criminal; and I thought of the degradation and shame heaped like mire upon me by my father—and that was moral and good.

"Phew!" I said in my turn. "Phew!"

A servant summoned me to the library.

My father sat beside the library table, drumming with his fingers on an open book. Upon my entry he looked up—a look of despair wherein love gleamed; and love, like a star, made his desolate and lost look beautiful, as starlight may make beautiful a desolate and lost scene.

"Forgive me, Brian."

"Father," I said, "forgive me." And I added hurriedly, "It isn't as you think. There's nothing foul —"

But I paused. I could not go on. A burden of shame, the shame I had felt once before in reading *Notes for Boys*, crushed down my soul hopelessly. This shame had nothing to do with reason or conscience. No, it was hereditary altogether. Because hundreds of Puritan Banakers had felt this shame before love, I now could not help feeling it before love, just as, because hundreds of Puritan Banakers had been tall, I now could not help being tall in my turn. Idle, indeed, to struggle against such a sense of shame as this, as idle as to struggle against my height; and I said desperately—

"No, I can't tell you. Only—only love seems to me beautiful—like moonlight—like a moonlit sea. There's nothing foul—Oh, how could you say—"

"Love!" sneered my father. "You call this love! But is she a good girl? Would you marry her?"

"I'd marry her gladly," I replied. And I thrilled at the thought of Christine as the fair young mother of little, joyous children, our children, hers and mine. "But," I added sadly, "I'm nothing to her. You'd understand if you once saw her. She's so beautiful, while I—" I made a gesture of humility. "What am I?"

My father smiled faintly. "How old is she?" he asked.

"She is nineteen."

My father, with a sigh, walked to the window. With his back turned to me, he stood at the window looking out. The clear light dwelt cruelly on the grey strands in his hair. My father was beginning to look old.

"I suppose we ought to marry younger than we do," he said; and, still with his back turned to me, he continued, "You are more intelligent than I. You have a fine sense of honour—I'm proud of your sense of honour. Yet for a year you've been getting drunk, getting arrested, making a laughing-stock of us; and now—this! I can't understand it."

He rested his elbows on the window-sash, he rested his cheeks upon his palms. The light revealed his thinning hair. I saw that he was almost bald. "I can't understand it," he repeated. "I'm afraid we'll become enemies. But, no—you are so young—I must stay your friend—help you."

He turned impulsively; he came towards me with outstretched hand; and he essayed one of his radiant smiles of old time; but the smile was pathetic on his worn face.

"Give her up!" he said.

Meeting his look, I made no answer; and his smile faded, his hand fell.

"I don't know what to do," he said. He played with a book upon the table. "I'm at a loss." He sat down wearily. "A father and son—Such a scene as this—What is the world coming to?"

"Father," I cried, "what I've done is right. I know it's right. Why, I was a laughing-stock. Ignorant, at my age, of women! But now—now I can hold up my head."

I looked at my father. I seemed to read in his eyes a strange sympathy, a strange acquiescence, mingled with horror.

"I've never given these things much thought," my father mused. "Earlier marriages, perhaps—" He

broke off furiously. "But it's horrible, it's unnatural, this discussion. One generation can't discuss such things with another."

I nodded in agreement. "Will you let me have that money?" I said.

"No, of course not!"

"But I've given my word about Bermuda."

"Break your word."

To this I made no reply.

"I could lock you up, I suppose," my father mused. "But no—I'm done with violence."

Our eyes met. My father's eyes, sunken amid wrinkles, were full of sorrow and perplexity. But my own eyes were full of a smiling and youthful confidence, a patronizing confidence. Thus I withdrew.

Thus I withdrew, I hurried down town, and in an ecstasy of joy and reverence I entered the bright and tawdry apartment of Christine.

She waited me in her little gilt drawing-room. She was dressed in blue, she wore an ermine hat, an ermine muff lay beside her, and an ermine stole was slipping from her shoulders. Upon my entry she put down her book, and, rising, she advanced and kissed me gravely—a fresh, soft kiss.

"Did you get that money?" she said.

Overcome with happiness, I could not speak. I hid my face upon her shoulder, I pressed my lips to the flowerlike flesh, the pale, warm, fragrant flesh, of her long neck. But she drew back gently.

"Did you get that money?" she repeated.

"Yes," said I.

"How much?"

"I shan't know till after luncheon."

"Well, I must drink a lot with luncheon," said Christine. "I feel dreadful. Do I look dreadful?"

"Dreadful—you!" I cried.

She looked, in truth, all the more beautiful. Her pallor brought out the fresh and brilliant scarlet of her wilful lips. Her eyes seemed more liquid and more luminous from the shadows under them. Her smile was more delicious by reason of its languor.

We set out, breasting, under the grey sky, dust whirl-pools and bitter wind.

"Brr!" said Christine, as she drew her ermine stole across her mouth. "Bermuda will be jolly after this."

We lunched in Fifth Avenue, and after luncheon, leaving her in the restaurant over her coffee, I sped in a hansom to a moneylender's. The moneylender gladly advanced me a thousand dollars, I signed a receipt for two thousand, and then I hastened with my booty back to Christine.

"Oh," she cried, "a thousand will be lots. What a time we'll have, eh?" She finished her liqueur hurriedly. "Come," she said, with a gay, excited air, "come; I want to do some shopping."

The avenue, on our departure, was thronged with handsome women in rich furs. The air was softer and moister now. Grey clouds hung low in the sky.

"I must have a cabin trunk," said Christine.

And leading me from shop to shop, from counter to counter, she bought a cabin trunk, a Panama hat, white boots, blouses, white stockings, a white coat. Soon she had spent two hundred dollars.

"Now I'll stop," she said. She regarded me mischievously and tenderly. "You'd let me spend it all, wouldn't you?"

"Yes, spend it all, do!" I murmured, drunk with happiness. "I can get more."

Boarding a hansom, we drove to the steamship office in Broadway. We secured a little suite on the promenade deck. The Bermuda boat, we were told, sailed an hour after midnight.

"One o'clock, eh?" said Christine. "That gives us time for the theatre and supper."

It was snowing when we returned to our hansom, a heavy snowfall of fine flakes. The city buildings, behind flowing veils of white, had a pale, wraithlike look. They seemed, like the snow itself, to float, to sway. And as we drove uptown the storm increased in violence. We separated in a wild wind, two wraithlike figures in a wild billowing of snow veils, to prepare for our voyage south.

When, at seven, we met again in evening dress, our luggage had been put aboard, and we were quite free till one o'clock.

"Isn't it jolly?" said Christine, as our carriage pushed slowly through the snow-choked streets. "A fine, long, snowy evening before us—then the boat—then Bermuda, and roses and midsummer. Isn't it jolly?"

She turned to me and smiled. She was charming in the pale, strange light of the snow. Her eyes shone. Her cheeks were delicately flushed. A white aigrette nodded in her glittering hair.

"How glad I am that I met you again!" I said. "I've thought of you so often since that Christmas night. I wish we were never going to separate again."

Smiling humorously, she gave my arm a light and gentle pressure.

"And you don't remember kissing me!"

"Pooh, what's a kiss? But look at the snow! Isn't it lovely?"

The snow, indeed, had spread a thick white mantle over all the city. And in fine flakes, in flowing, billowing veils, it still fell steadily. The illuminated windows of the huge hotels were panels of misty gold, and in the panels' light the snow rolled misty golden billows back and forth.

Our dinner was delightful. But during our dinner I was continually aware that Christine gazed at some one behind me, that she even smiled at some one behind me. This, however, I could overlook. For I knew well that Christine did not love me as I loved her.

But in the hall, when we came forth, a young man awaited us. As we advanced, he shouldered his way past great vases, palms and groups of guests, and, putting himself directly in our path, he gave Christine a broad smile, almost a nod.

I was enraged, enraged not through jealousy, but through pride. What did this young man take me for? I met his eye, I scowled, I stepped towards him; but, with a perturbed look, he turned and disappeared behind a palm.

"What's the matter?" said Christine demurely—a little too demurely.

"Oh, nothing."

But I was cold and grim on the way to the theatre. Perhaps my father was right. Perhaps I would regret our Bermuda trip. "Marry you!" I thought bitterly. "I'd like to see myself marrying you!"

The musical comedy of *Naughty Nell* restored my happiness. We had a stage box, and from my seat beside Christine I recognized in the audience this acquaint-

ance and that—old Tillinghast Corcoran, Mrs. Rutherford, Billy Wilkins, the Earle girls. My acquaintances directed their glasses on me, and under their glasses I assumed an air haughty and cold, proud and weary and scornful.

During the first interval I met Billy Wilkins in the foyer.

"Brian," said he, "that's a pretty girl you've got with you."

"Yes," I said indifferently.

With his frank, cool smile Billy added:

"Her furs, though, are imitation, my aunt tells me."

"I doubt that," I muttered, and I regarded him with an astonished frown, for it was not like Billy Wilkins to say malicious things.

He met my frown with his cool smile. He adjusted his pince-nez calmly. Then, looking me straight in the eye, he said:

"I'm sorry to see you going about with girls of that sort. I thought you were above it."

I shrugged, but, before I could reply, the bell rang, and we parted.

At Hogan's, in the second interval, as I stood with a glass of beer in one hand and a cigarette in the other, Gilbert Allen entered, his brown hat and brown coat white with snow. He accosted me gaily.

"Hello, what luck!" he said, "I'm writing up a cock fight. Don't you want to come and see it with me?"

"No, I can't," said I; and I added carelessly, "I'm sailing for Bermuda with a girl at one o'clock."

"Oh, are you?" he stammered, and a frown darkened his brow. His sad eyes, which avoided mine, seemed to say, "He, too." And he hurriedly changed the subject.

But I, alas, would not spare him. I could not spare him. My happiness was so great that I must spread it, like a rich treasure, before my friend. I did not, to be sure, lie and boast to him in the Nu Gamma way. If I displayed my treasure of happiness with enthusiasm, I displayed it with humility, gratitude, awe. But all the while I was conscious of his misery. That, however, though I pitied him, could not check me in my display of happiness, any more than the misery of the poor checks the rich in their display of wealth.

Long before I had finished he said:

"Well, good-bye. I must be off to my cock fight."

"But wait. I haven't told you yet——"

"No, I can't wait. Good-bye."

And in his shabby brown suit he hurried forth. His thin, bowed back, wet with melted snow, seemed to sigh:

"He, too."

III

CHRISTINE and I had supper after *Naughty Nell*. Then, in a wild blizzard, we drove to the boat.

What a drive! The horse, head down, laboured knee-deep through white, deserted streets. Everywhere enormous drifts uprose. The icy wind roared, shrieked and moaned; it penetrated our furs, ran up our sleeves and down our collars; it burnt the tender flesh of arms and back and chest. And from white drifts and white streets the snow, in the wild wind, kept curling up like smoke. Yes, the whole white scene smoked furiously; and, driving against our faces, the fine flakes stung like shot.

"Kiss me," said Christine, shivering and laughing.
"Kiss me. Warm me up."

Our lips, cold and wet with snow, met in the white turmoil of the storm.

"Kiss me," she repeated. "Brr! Kiss me again."

The boat, coated with ice and snow, gleamed ghostlike in the night. We boarded her. We inspected our little suite. Then, entering the saloon, we seated ourselves at a table in a corner.

"How the people stare at us!" said Christine, drawing her scarf of pale gauze round her shoulders. "A queer lot, aren't they?"

A queer lot they were, both men and women. Their boots and their hair looked unkempt. Their flabby faces,

thanks to steam heat and bad cooking, had the hue and texture of stale dough. Their dress, of cloth stiff and yet flimsy—our famous shoddy cloth—was cut upon lines that made their limbs seem too short and their bodies too big and square.

"The men are worse than the women," I said.

"The men are hopeless," Christine agreed.

The men all, without exception, needed shaving, and from the stale hide of cheek and chin protruded bristles brown or grey, black or red, bristles to which clung, here and there, white shreds of lint. Though often fifty-five or sixty years of age, the men carried themselves with the self-conscious swagger of college boys; they wore college-boy hats with gay bands and gaily tilted brims; they seemed, indeed, to ape college boys; and their suits' garish colours—purple, chocolate, pea-green—accorded ill with the glistening silver stubble on their chins.

Dismal hoots announced our departure. For a while the sailing was smooth, then we began to roll. Christine grew pale and listless. With a gulp she said she would turn in.

We retired to our rooms. "Oh, I'm so sick," she moaned, and she threw herself on the couch, a figure lovely and miserable in the silver splendour of her evening gown. She kicked the cushions with slim feet in silver shoes. "I'm so sick. Damn the old boat! Can't we make them put us ashore?"

That night, despite the rolling, I slept well. But I rose with a wretched headache. It was all I could do to dress. When I stooped I felt especially ill.

Dressed at last, I knocked at Christine's door. A groan answered me. A choking voice said hurriedly:

"Don't come in!"

With a feeble smile I mounted to the deck. The day was grey and cold: a circle of grey waters, a dome of grey clouds: and clouds and waters all hurrying, hurrying, before a bleak and cheerless wind, to an horizon bleak and cheerless.

I descended to the dining-saloon and tried to eat. But the rolling in the dining-saloon was horrible. Ham, eggs and fish all tasted alike. Foul smells drifted to my nostrils. A lump kept rising in my throat. I could not even drink my chicory.

Wearily I sped up on to the deck again. There I now found Christine. Christine, wrapped in furs, reclined, somnolent and pale, in a deck-chair. We spent the day in deck-chairs side by side. We ate only fruit. The bleak winds washed us, they cheered us a little. Our hands met languidly beneath our rugs.

At sunset Christine retired. "Come down at ten," she said; and, as we parted, we exchanged a languid and tender smile.

I dined alone, and I enjoyed my cold storage dinner; but the stewards treated my compatriots like dirt. "We'll get nothin' out of this crowd, Jack," the stewards would say to one another, and, if a Peorian ordered bubble and squeak, his steward was sure to bring him trifles, drowning his timid remonstrance with a roar: "Is it my fault, sir? I won't stand insult! If you want to complain, go upstairs and complain to the chief. But don't browbeat me, sir, for I won't stand it. I'm an Englishman."

I spent the evening in the smoke-room. There, as they talked, my compatriots rubbed their palms over their unshaven chins, producing, like those Japanese insects

that rub one leg across another, a strange, harsh note, a natural music, the anthem, as it were, of the American business man. And they kept fiddling with strange objects—with fountain pens attached to their waistcoat pockets by silver clips, with nickel cigar-cutters that unfolded into foot-rules, with combination nail-files and ear-picks fixed to the ends of watch chains. But what did they talk about? They talked about business, about business deals and dickers that were neither more nor less than theft, and their talk was intelligent, tolerant, and humorous enough. But of books, of music, of pictures they said never a word; for to all life's beauty they were blind.

At ten, shivering in the icy wind, I crossed the deck and went below.

I fell asleep on a cold winter night. I awoke on a midsummer morning. Floods of hot sunshine streamed in through the open windows. The air was warm and languorous. After my bath I was obliged to turn on the electric fan in order to dress in comfort. I dressed in grey flannels. Where, though, was Christine? I rang, and a stewardess said, "The young lady has gone up on deck, sir."

I hurried forth. For three or four minutes my search was vain. But at last, far up in the bow, leaning over the rail, her shoulder touching a young man's shoulder, I saw her, a slim white vision. From head to foot she was dressed in white: white coat, white blouse, white skirt, white shoes. And the young man beside her, looking down into the blue water, his sleek head close to hers, was dressed with equal elegance in a brown lounge suit, cut tight after the English fashion.

They did not hear my approach. The young man said

something in a quick, abrupt, English voice, and Christine laughed softly. I halted behind them.

"Good-morning."

But they paid me no heed, and, clearing my throat, I repeated in a louder key:

"Good-morning."

"Oh, hello!" said Christine. She turned and faced me, her elbows resting on the rail behind her. "Captain Essex—"

And now the young man turned. He had a long, brown, oval face, clean-cut features, and a tiny mustache.

"Captain Essex, I want you to shake hands with Mr. Banaker."

We shook hands. Then, with Christine between us, we began to walk the deck in the sunshine. The sea was blue, blue. The mild airs were of a July softness. In the sky's pure and brilliant azure floated a few white clouds.

Christine and Captain Essex flirted gaily, while I mused in silence on their "pick-up."

For their acquaintance was a pick-up, of course. But pick-ups, on shipboard, are deemed quite proper. Nevertheless, with sorrow and disgust, I reviewed in fancy this pick-up, which I knew well had been managed altogether by Christine. First I saw her glance, her glance of polite, but shy and timid interest. Such a shy, timid, girlish glance! A mischievous look had followed it. Then a smile. Then smile on smile, dazzling, intoxicating, like volleys of roses, till the young soldier was imbued at last with sufficient courage to come forward and address her.

And I said over and over to myself, "Ah, how could she? After what has passed, how could she?" while

through my sorrowful meditation strains of gay talk pierced.

"Do you know many American girls, captain?"

"No; not many."

"Well, how do you like the few you know?"

"Oh, they're ripping."

"I know some Englishmen—Lord Dernley and Harry Haviland."

"Do you like Englishmen?"

"Yes; better than Americans."

Christine, as she said this, took my arm and smiled gaily in my face.

"Oh, what a scowl!" she cried. "Cheer up. I was only joking."

But my misery would not let me cheer up, and I jerked my arm from hers. "I'm going down to breakfast," I said, and I hurried away, my eyes full of tears.

She joined me while I was eating my grape-fruit. Her beauty and gaiety soon dissipated my gloom. And we spent the day as I had dreamed: a day of happiness, on which Captain Essex did not once obtrude.

Bermuda was sighted the next morning—low green slopes, with the white pyramids of the roofs showing, like vaults, amid thick foliage.

"Bermuda is like a cemetery," said Christine. "Those white houses look like cemetery vaults."

But the water was wonderful. Through its clear depths the eye pierced to the coral bottom of pink or blue twenty feet below. And in that water as transparent as air shining fish swam calmly, fish with the clear and lovely hues of precious stones.

"Oh, look at the eels!" cried Christine. "They've got sword beaks! Swordfish eels! Look!"

"They are gars, not eels," said Captain Essex.

Disembarking at Hamilton, we drove up steep white streets to the white Hamilton Hotel. The January day was like July. Sunshine slept on the white roads; and against the sun-drenched white houses the grotesque poinsettia brandished its great red stars. Palms uprose in the still blue air, and scarlet birds, resembling tiny parrots, darted like jewels through the sleepy splendour and the sleepy silence.

"Isn't it lovely?" said Christine. "It's like a dream."

At the hotel we chose a suite looking out upon the hotel gardens. Christine put on another frock and another hat, and we went forth to have a walk before luncheon.

On our walk we passed a good many trim soldiers dressed in khaki. One soldier polished an officer's boots in a shed. A second was washing dishes. A third darned an officer's wife's stockings at an open window.

Though the shops were tame, Christine bought a dried angel-fish, a dried red-fish, a dozen star-fish, and a remarkable curiosity, namely, a beer bottle imbedded in a lump of white coral. "For professional friends," she explained, and she dismissed me at a dressmaker's.

Captain Essex, when I entered the hotel lounge, rose and advanced cordially, explaining that Christine had invited him to luncheon.

"Well," said I, "she'll be here in a minute or two. She's being fitted for a frock across the way."

Christine entered as I spoke, and we repaired to the dining-room.

In the cool, pale, spacious dining-room the waitresses were dressed in black, with white caps and aprons, and

each waitress carried a black tray with her name painted on it in enormous white letters—"Mary," "Ella," "Emeline."

Christine, over the coarse fish called red snapper, condemned the waitresses' strangely labelled trays. "I don't like it. It looks shoddy," she said.

"It's New England," said I. "This is a typical New England hotel. You'll find everything very good here."

The luncheon was, indeed, excellent, with its fresh Bermuda vegetables and fruit, its new peas and new potatoes, its fresh strawberries and tiny, delicate fig-bananas; and the hot buns served in lieu of bread gave the meal a quaint New England touch.

We took our coffee in the garden after luncheon under a calabash tree. The air was sweet and soft and heavy in the garden. Velvet lawns sloped to grey walls overgrown with pink roses, and here palms soared up into the blue, and there great beds of tulips sparkled.

"Oh, dear," fretted Christine, kicking her pretty white shoes on the pebbled path. "I'm bored. What can we do?"

We decided to drive to Tom Moore's. But Captain Essex, though pressed by Christine, would not accompany us. He was going to tea at Government House with his sister.

"You must introduce your sister!" Christine cried cordially; but the captain, without replying, gave her an odd look which she did not seem to notice.

Our drive by the North Shore Road to Tom Moore's was divine—a drive in an open carriage, through delicious sunshine and soft airs, on a white coral road beside a sea of sparkling blue.

Every little while we crossed a bridge, the water was

as transparent as air, and as in blue air beneath us fish of emerald and pearl and sapphire hung, calmly waving their translucent fins.

Christine in her white gown leaned back and crossed her knees. "This is fine," she said.

But I looked grimly out to sea, for I was jealous of Captain Essex. Jealousy—how ridiculous and ignoble! Yet how wise, too! For assuredly I had not brought Christine to Bermuda at a cost of a thousand dollars for the benefit of Captain Essex.

"This is fine," she repeated, giving me a sidelong glance. Her glance was demure—too demure—it was mocking. Well, I must not let her mock me. So I banished my jealous thoughts, and talked as amiably as I could till Tom Moore's house appeared.

Tom Moore's house bored her, but she was enchanted by the poet's verses to Nea.

"Who was Nea?" she asked.

"Nea," the caretaker answered, "was a young lady belonging to the aristocratic Innerbridge family."

But our driver, on the drive back to Hamilton, said with a chuckle of scorn:

"Nea was an Innerbridge, but she belonged to the coloured branch."

"Oh, are there white and coloured Innerbridges?"

"Yes'm; we've got white and coloured branches to all the Bermuda families."

"There's a dance to-night at the hotel," said Christine. "Shall we go?"

"Yes, if you like."

"Captain Essex has promised to introduce a lot of officers to me at the dance. I think he's awfully nice, don't you?"

"No."

"No! Why not?"

"Because he's a snob, a nasty, vulgar snob. Flirting with you, eating your food, drinking your wine, he actually had the impudence to sneer this morning when you told him to introduce his sister."

"He did sneer, didn't he?" said Christine, with a pensive little smile. "I noticed it."

"Yes, he sneered."

"Well, we'll have to punish him," she said, still smiling pensively.

"If you want to punish him," I muttered, "the best way is to cut him."

But she only laughed at this, laughed heartily, bending on me a mischievous look.

For the dance, on our return, she chose a very décolleté black gown.

"Do you think it's too décolleté?"

"Er—no; I don't think so," I said dubiously.

She gave me, at the dance, the first two waltzes. Then a circle of smart young officers engulfed her.

Jealous and sad, I went upstairs for a book. Book in hand, I sought the café. And there, at a table in a quiet corner, reading, smoking, sipping whisky and soda, I almost forgot the troubles of love.

But even in the café Christine tormented me. She entered with an officer every half-hour or so to drink a glass of lemonade. I, on her entry, buried my nose in my volume, pretending not to see her. But she invariably brought up her officer and introduced him.

"Major Lancelot, shake hands with my husband."

IV

"CHRISTINE, dear, why do you torment me so?"
"I don't know; do I torment you?"

We sat side by side, in a silent and ghostly hour, upon the balcony of our sitting-room. The moon floated in a pale, clear sky. The garden dreamed in moonlight. Christine, bathed in rays of translucent pearl, had a beauty mystical and grave.

She wore only a dressing-gown of thin white silk, with red mules on her little bare feet.

"You torment me because you don't love me, I suppose."

"I'm very fond of you, Brian, dear."

"But you don't love me, do you?"

"Well, you don't love me, either."

"There is something cruel in you," I cried. "I believe you actually find pleasure in making me jealous."

"You're so funny when you're jealous," she admitted, smiling.

"I didn't love you at first, perhaps," I said. "If I had loved you at first, I'd have asked you to marry me instead of bringing you away like this."

"I don't know," she said pensively. "We can't always marry those we love."

I put my arm about her. Strangely undulant her young body in the dressing-gown of thin silk; and her unbound hair, mysterious in the moonlight, moved against my cheek as if alive.

"Will you marry me now, dear?"

"You don't want me to marry you."

I touched her hair. "I do."

"If I married you, you wouldn't trust me," sighed Christine, and she withdrew her hair from my hand and threw it languidly to her other shoulder.

"But," I said, "to trust you—that is why I want to marry you. I don't deserve to trust you now, for in bringing you off in this way I've treated you like one who couldn't be trusted. Forgive me for it!"

"You've treated me well enough," she murmured.

"If I treat you honourably, then I know you'll treat me honourably," I said.

"If we had met before—" fretted Christine. She was silent for a little while. "You see," she said, "we've met too late."

"Why too late?" said I. "Tell me about yourself. You've often promised to tell me. Well, tell me now—in the moonlight."

She gazed down into the silver silence of the garden. She gave a faint, helpless sigh. "What's the use?" she said. Then she began:

"Father kept a little shop, a little corner grocery."

"It wasn't true, then, about your father being a judge."

"You knew it wasn't true."

"Well, go on."

"Home, sweet home!" Her young mouth curled in a sneer. "But my home was a hell."

"How a hell!" said I.

"Oh—"

And in broken phrases she described the dirty and overcrowded cottage, with its ragged, fighting children.

She described the uneatable meals at the table covered with brown oilcloth, the noise and confusion, the baby roaring in its high-chair, the father and mother fronting one another amid their ragged brood in a black silence, or else quarrelling fiercely, saying the worst things they could think of, wishing they had never met each other, wishing they had never married each other, wishing each other dead.—“Home, sweet home.”

“All homes are not like that,” I said lamely.

“Up to the age of fourteen,” Christine resumed, “they kept me on at school. At fourteen I was to go to work in the Blue Mill, like all the other Perkiomen girls. But—”

“But you didn’t like the Blue Mill, eh?”

“Brian, that mill is ruin, simply ruin. I don’t know what there is about it, but the freshest, prettiest mill girls get covered in a year or so with yellow blotches.”

She gave me an inquiring glance.

“Do you know what I mean by yellow blotches? I mean marks like freckles, only larger—yellow marks as large as quarters. Ugh!

“And the mill smell. There’s a heavy, greasy, sickening smell to a mill girl’s clothes and hair and skin. She can’t get rid of it. Even on Sunday she can’t get rid of it. She stands in that mill smell, tending a noisy machine, ten hours and a half a day. In a year or two she’ll be a wreck. She knows it; she submits to it. Why? Because, Jimmy Fontaine says, because her employer pays the preachers to tell her it is right to submit to it. I, though, was no such fool as to believe the bribed preachers’ lies.”

Christine gave me a sombre nod.

“It’s right, Jimmy Fontaine says, for George Smollett

year after year to ruin the health of three hundred girls. Yes, it's right. Nobody blames him. *Business.*"

She crossed restlessly her round and dimpled knees, which gleamed through the white gown. She gave me another sombre nod.

"Take your choice," she said, "between George Smollett and Jimmy Fontaine. I'm Jimmy's victim. Look at me." And sitting erect in the gown of thin silk, which moulded her girlish breasts, her supple body, and her long, slim, delicate limbs, she smiled faintly in the moonlight, conscious of her beauty.

"Look at me—then look at Smollett's girls."

"There'd be a difference," I agreed. "But go on with your story, dear."

She sank back into the depths of her chair.

"There was a salesman," she said languidly, "who used to make love to me."

"How old were you?"

"About fourteen. But I looked older. I asked this salesman if he'd help me to escape from the Blue Mill. He was awfully kind. He introduced me to Jimmy Fontaine.

"Jimmy Fontaine was a dancing master. He taught stage dancing. Jimmy was awfully kind, too. He took me on as a regular pupil, and I was to pay up when I could. But for him I'd be one of Smollett's wrecks to-day."

With a shrug she rose. "I'm going in," she murmured. "You come, too."

She stood between my knees, looking down at me with a kind of arch and caressing gaiety, and she was so beautiful in the moonlight that I put my arms about

her smooth, warm, supple waist, and gazing up into her eyes, I whispered:

"Do you love me? Will you marry me?"

She bent over gravely, slowly; her young breasts brushed my face; she pressed her lips to mine.

"I love you for asking me to marry you," she said.
"Only you've got no money, dear."

Though my question had been sincere, yet her answer relieved me strangely.

"But you won't make me jealous any more?" I said.

She unclasped my arms from about her waist. With a demure, shocked smile she turned away. I repeated:

"And you won't make me jealous any more?"

"Oh, but you're so funny when you're jealous," said Christine over her shoulder carelessly.

V

WE bathed the next morning in the sea. The sea was warm, it was like August bathing, but the firm white bottom was sprinkled with sea-urchins, resembling brown chestnut burrs, which the bare feet must avoid.

Though Christine could not swim, she waded to and fro, up to her neck, peering down for sea-urchins through the clear blue water, whilst I pushed out to Butler Glaenzer Cove.

Then, in the languorous air, we walked back to the hotel. But the air became too languorous. Rain clouds obscured the sun. Panting in our white dress up the steep white road, mopping continually our wet brows, we agreed that the Bermuda climate was a hot, heavy and oppressive one.

From the boarding-houses and cheap hotels our sweating compatriots streamed in winter clothes. The women had made no change whatever in their toilet, but the men all, without exception, wore new white felt hats. Those little, round, snowy hats, intended only for boys, made the men's leathery faces seem strangely old and hard, strangely coarse and degraded. In their self-conscious way, as they passed us, the men scratched their heads, picked their ears, or passed their hands, with a loud rustle, jauntily over their unshaven chins, to which, as always, lint clung here and there.

"That lint," said Christine, "where does it come from?"

"The bristles of their beards," I replied, "tear it from the towels."

A group of young officers advanced in mufti. Slim, erect and brown, the young officers, with their serene air, increased by contrast my compatriots' air of jaunty knavishness. The effect of a lifetime of business cheats was terribly visible, in this new setting of the tropics, on my compatriots' faces.

"Oh, here is Captain Essex! Captain Essex, you mustn't forget my invitation to the masquerade ball at Government House."

"My sister," said the captain, frowning, "will get the invitation to-day."

Christine turned to me, a sparkle of mischief in her eyes. "Captain Essex introduced his sister last night. I think Miss Essex is awfully nice."

The captain prepared to go. "And it's understood," he said, "that you drive with me to Hill View this afternoon!"

"Yes," she rejoined demurely, "if Brian doesn't mind."

"Why should I mind?" I snarled.
• • • • •

Thus passed my Bermudian holiday—a happy holiday when I was alone with Christine, a miserable one when Captain Essex appeared. But why did I not forbid the continual appearance of the captain? I did not forbid it because I deemed jealousy undignified, absurd, base.

Yet I could not help being jealous. And my jealousy, though silent, was palpable enough—it took a black, sullen, lowering form. But Christine and the captain paid

it no heed. They flirted gaily in its grim shadow. True, they went off no more alone—after their drive to Hill View I only spoke in monosyllables for three days—but Christine disappeared an hour or two every morning, now to visit the dressmaker, now to visit the coiffeur, and how did I know she was not really visiting the captain? An ignoble desire to follow her tormented me.

And on my happiness and misery alike the Bermudian sun shone, and the Bermudian showers fell. The days were warm and languorous. The white roofs sparkled like snow in the moonlight. Through the open windows the perfume of roses and lilies floated in.

We spent our last evening alone. We danced a little; we sat in the café; we wandered in the moonlit garden. Christine was pensive, silent, gentle—but cold, colder than ice.

"Christine," I said for the hundredth time, "why have you tormented me so?"

She had been standing, drenched in moonlight, beside a bed of lilies. For a long time she stood there, beautiful and silent, her dreaming eyes fixed on something far away. Now, at my words, she frowned.

"Have I tormented you?" she said. "Well, I didn't mean to."

And she began to dream again. All the evening she dreamed. And I knew well what her dreams foreboded.

At nine the next morning—we were to sail at eleven—she entered my bedroom and said quietly:

"I'm going to the dressmaker's, Brian, dear. I'll be back in good time for the boat."

Cold, pitilessly cold, her quiet air. "Very well, Christine," I said.

Humming a tune, she walked to the door, but at the

door she turned. She gave me a strange look; she hesitated. I tried to speak, but something hindered me. With an odd smile she waved her hand. I knew well I would never see her again.

"I don't care," I mused. "I don't care."

And I lay and gazed forth in a dream at the sea's blue plain sparkling between masses of foliage.

Her misspelt note, which a servant brought up almost at once, did not surprise me. Captain Essex, she said, was rich, while my father's lawyer had written her that my allowance was to cease until we separated. So I must not blame her now if she stayed on here with Captain Essex. Love and kisses, and cheer up, for I was sure to meet lots of girls nicer than—Christine.

"I don't care," I mused, rising slowly.

And I boarded the steamer alone. I entered our well-remembered cabin. I seated myself on the bench beneath the window. "I don't care," I muttered. "There was nothing in her. I don't care."

But suddenly a hundred memories overcame me, and the desolate cabin seemed to weep.

My grief was like a stab of dreadful pain. With contorted face I lifted up my arms to heaven, as a heart-broken child lifts its arms to its mother. "Oh," I groaned, "oh——"

But heaven offered me no solace. So I rushed forth from the desolate, weeping cabin to the solace of the bar.



BOOK IV

I

LANDING from the Bermuda boat, I found that, out of shame, I could not face my father.— I felt extremely well. I had made the homeward voyage in a daze of alcohol, eating like a horse. And now, as I paced the windy pier, beside the sun-lit, blue, rough river, I felt almost content. After the steamy heat of Bermuda, this dry and glittering cold was almost a joy. Nevertheless, for shame, I could not face my father.

What was I to do?

A poster of Atlantic City caught my eye, a gay picture poster of sea and promenade and vast hotels; and on the spur of the moment I set off for Atlantic City in the famous "Flying Bullet."

The famous "Flying Bullet" finished her four-hour journey five hours late, and I chose in my Atlantic City caravanserai a bedroom that resounded like a shell with the breakers' deep, soft note. I persuaded a maid to unpack my boxes for me. Then, having dressed, I dined; and after dinner, at a little desk beside the hall fire, I wrote for the first time to my father.

I told my father that I knew I had done badly since my graduation, but I was resolved now to turn over a new leaf and go to work. Being, however, very un-

happy, I would stay on here till I recovered my spirits; and I would be glad if he would send Chesterton down to me, and a little money as well. In ten days or a fortnight he would see me again, and we would then settle on my future work between us.

In Atlantic City, with books, with alcohol, and with long walks on the promenade, in a cold and thrilling air, beside a wild sea foaming and glittering in winter sunshine, I now set about the recovery of my spirits.

I rose at nine; I took a sea-water bath in my white bathroom; I shaved and dressed in country clothes of soft, rough stuff; and at ten, with an enormous appetite, I breakfasted in the sunny dining-room, at a table facing the blue combers, a newspaper propped before me. After breakfast I trudged the boardwalk briskly until two. At two I lunched; and after luncheon I trudged the boardwalk briskly again until the last red flare of sunset faded from the sky. Then, returning in the cold, blue, starry dusk, I lounged in an armchair with a book till it was time to dress for dinner. I dressed very carefully for dinner—there were some pretty girls at the hotel—and I drank with the long, tasteless and lukewarm meal a half-bottle of champagne. I drank a liqueur with my coffee. And during the evening, seated before the wood fire in the hall, I drank two or three brandy-and-sodas. All this drinking, I was not displeased to see, caused the pretty girls to stare at me with wide, awestricken eyes. At eleven I retired to my room, where, if the spirit moved me, I drank another brandy-and-soda while undressing. An excess of alcohol. And yet this alcohol, thanks to the long hours I spent in the open air, seemed to do me good rather than harm.

Was I unhappy? Yes, I was most unhappy. Every

half-hour I thought, "Ah, how delightful this would be if she were here!" And a wave of loneliness swept over me; I felt as lonely and forsaken as some poor old greybeard in an almshouse; and, in my evening dress before the fire, over my book and drink and cigarette, a sob choked me—but I repressed it, under the clear eyes of those pretty girls, in time.

Often in my fireside musings vanity was uppermost, and I rejoiced to think that nothing would ever be known of my rout before Captain Essex's superior charms. Often, on the other hand, I was cynical, and longed to give the whole story to the world as an example of the treachery of woman. But for the most part I grieved, I grieved profoundly and sincerely, over the beauty, the marred beauty, of my lost relation with Christine. And this marred beauty seemed my own fault. For I had not obeyed the true dictates of my heart. I had not put from me the conventional belief that a girl once fallen is forever degraded. No, for all my glib talk, I did not treat Christine in her unchastity in Bermuda as I would have treated a young man in his; but I treated her as we treat those afflicted with incurable disease; I treated her as a hopeless case. How, then, have expected fair and honest treatment from her in return!

Amid these dreary musings I drank, one night, too many brandy-and-sodas, and rose in the morning with a headache.

"Oh, dear," I said, "I'm sick of this. I'll go back home and get to work."

II

WORK.—There were, I reasoned, two kinds of work, the useful and the beautiful. The beautiful comprised the arts—music, literature, painting—but towards the arts, alas, I had no leaning. The useful comprised medicine, the law, manufactures, etc. I seemed to have no leaning towards the useful, either. What work, then, could I choose?

Big John Murray, a medical student now, arranged a day that would, he swore, decide me to choose medicine.

A surgical clinic inaugurated big John Murray's day. He opened a door, the smell of ether floated forth, and we entered an amphitheatre where a hundred youths watched half a dozen white-robed surgeons and nurses working swiftly.

What were they working on? The ether terrified and sickened me. Down step after step I stumbled, with lowered lids, on big John's heels. We seated ourselves in the front row of the amphitheatre. "A tenderfoot," some one whispered. I dared to lift my eyes.

Horrors! A woman, pale and lifeless, lay on her back before me on a white table, while a surgeon removed a tumour from her breast. Horrors! A grey cloud enveloped me, and, deathly sick, I broke into a cold sweat.

"Brace up," said big John.

After a long while I lifted my eyes again. The woman had disappeared, but the tumour, on a white platter, was being passed from bench to bench. And while

a surgeon in the pit discussed it earnestly, the students stuck toothpicks and matches in it as they handed it on.

The student beside me took a quid of tobacco from his mouth and laid it on the tumour.

"You callous brute!" I whispered.

Grinning, he looked at me out of small, dull, malicious eyes, and thrust the tumour almost in my face. I rose hurriedly.

"John, I can't stand this."

Back up the long, steep aisle again, back up the little rows of steps, I tottered on big John's arm. Chuckles and jeers, like clouds of gnats, rose round me. I heard the surgeon down below announcing that the next operation would be the removal of a brakeman's crushed legs.

Outside at last, thank God!

I leaned forth from an open window. I took deep breaths of the pure, cold air.

"It's nothing," said big John. "I, too, was like that at first."

"Nothing?" I said bitterly. "Nothing, eh?"

"Pooh, nothing whatever," he repeated. "This way now, if you want to see that baby born."

"John," said I, "to hell with you and your baby."

To make a lawyer of me, Billy Wilkins, who was now a law student, took me to hear his preceptor defend August Schwab.

August Schwab, a German cloakmaker, was accused of murder, the murder of ninety girls. Ninety girls had been burnt to death in a fire at his cloak factory, and it was charged that all these girls would have escaped if August Schwab had not, against the law, kept his fire exit locked.

The case began with the selection of the jury. In the selection of the jury Billy's preceptor spared no pains. He challenged man after man—a hundred men, two hundred men—till in the end he secured a jury composed of German cloakmakers exclusively.

The jury selected, argument and testimony began. The prosecution's testimony came from the survivors of the fire, some forty girls. These girls swore that August Schwab had truly kept his fire exit locked. He had kept it locked that none might sneak forth by it—that there should be one exit only—for he suspected theft amongst his hands, and so, at his one exit, he had all the girls searched for stolen cloak trimmings ere he suffered them to depart at the day's end.

But Billy's preceptor appeared to doubt this testimony, and with calm dignity, as if performing some quite honorable act, as if preaching a sermon or offering up a prayer, he threw handfuls of mud at each girl witness's head.

"Your name is Jenny Lavinsky, eh?"

"Yes, sir."

"Now, Jenny, answer me this—Did you, or did you not, have an illegitimate child last spring?"

"I did not."

"You did not? Humph. Did you ever, at any time, have an illegitimate child?"

"No, sir; never."

"Kindly look at this photograph."

Jenny looks at the photograph.

"Do you recognize that baby, Jenny?"

"No, sir."

"Humph. That will do."

Here, I suppose, the mud was thrown honestly—hon-

estly as courtroom ethics go—and Billy's preceptor made an honest mistake. But, for the most part, the man seemed to throw his mud with no other rhyme or reason than the vague hope that some of it might stick. He asked one girl, for example, how often she had been arrested for drunkenness at Coney Island. He asked another if she had not stolen a watch from an old man. He asked a third when she had last smoked opium in Chinatown. And he offered no proof that a single one of these accusations was true. Nevertheless, though the girls all denied his accusations hotly, it is likely enough that some of his mud stuck. Billy's preceptor threw it all with such a noble, pious air.

The defence called but one witness. This was August Schwab's manager. The manager testified that nobody had ever been searched at the cloak factory, that the fire exit had never been kept locked, that the forty girls had all lied.

Then, at last, the case was submitted to the jury. And the German cloakmaker jury, after an hour's debate, acquitted the German cloakmaker. The ninety dead victims of August Schwab went unavenged.

"Well!" said Billy, smiling, as we departed.

I studied his calm, intelligent face.

"I wouldn't have believed it," I said. "A jury like that—and such insults heaped on honest, poor, hard-working girls—no, I wouldn't have believed it."

"It was an unfortunate case to bring you to, perhaps," said Billy. "But, at the same time——"

"Billy," I cried, "have you a word to say in defence of this—this muck?"

He frowned, adjusted his pince-nez, and answered:

"Why, of course I have!"

"Well, I won't listen to you," I growled.
And I leapt into a hansom, I drove rapidly away.
"Billy Wilkins," I thought, "Billy Wilkins, who with
his unearthly goodness once awed me like a bishop!"

After my rejection of the law I turned to journalism,
passing an experimental afternoon with Gilbert Allen,
whom I called for at the luncheon hour in the local room
of the *Dispatch*.

Bare, unpainted, dusty, the *Dispatch's* local room,
with its ramshackle furniture, resembled an attic. The
dozen reporters were pale and lean, showy and shabby—
youths of poor quality. For journalism, Gilbert told
me, was, save on its "business office" side, a blind alley
occupation, offering too little ever to attract youths of
good quality to it.

The reporters got their assignments and swaggered
forth, smoking cigarettes or pipes. Gilbert then got his
own assignments, and he and I departed together.

As we lunched I questioned him excitedly. What
were his assignments like? Journalism seemed great
fun.

But Gilbert, over his well-peppered chop and tankard
of velvety beer, said in a gloomy voice that his first as-
signment was the investigation of a shameful rumour
about a millionaire's young widow—a rumour that—

"Holy God!" I cried.

"You may well say 'Holy God,'" said Gilbert Allen.

After luncheon we sought the young widow's house.
It was a brownstone house near Fifth Avenue. Before
its opulent façade we frowned and shook our heads
gloomily. Then we visited the shops in the neighbour-
hood, and Gilbert asked a grocer, a dairyman and a

baker if they had heard the rumour. All smiled evil smiles, all nodded evil nods, but all, in stereotyped phrases, refused to talk. "Nothin' to say," "Don't you put my name in the paper," etc. Gilbert then, to my consternation, resolved to go direct with his rumour to the young widow herself.

"Holy God!" I cried again.

"You may well say 'Holy God,'" he repeated, and, compressing his lips, he ascended the flight of brownstone steps and rang the bell. A negro butler admitted him. I waited anxiously on the other side of the street.

Five, ten minutes passed. Then the door flew open, and I saw Gilbert and the butler struggling violently together in the dim hall.

"Holy God!"

Locked in each other's arms, they swayed and revolved, back and forth, to and fro. A huge something, vase or statue, toppled slowly from a pedestal and fell with a loud crash. In a sudden mighty rush they advanced over the threshold. Like waltzers they spun round and round in the sunshine at the top of the brownstone stair. And now, changed as by magic into a great, squirming, kicking ball, they rolled heavily and rather slowly—thump, thump, thump—down the half-dozen steps to the pavement.

I saw Gilbert rise from beneath the butler and limp hurriedly away. He had forgotten me.

"Wait, old man," I called.

He halted, and when I overtook him, he muttered:

"What am I to do? I've got to make a living by writing, for none of the magazines will accept my work, but, I tell you, it's hard."

"You'll succeed yet," said I. "Young as you are,

you write far better already than those magazine guys.
Why do the magazines reject you, anyway?"

"Oh, they want trashy plots, and it takes a trashy mind to handle a trashy plot sincerely. The guys can beat me at that, and no mistake. But I've abandoned trash, old man. I'm doing a serious novel now. Maybe, if it succeeds, I'll be getting married. Ouch!"

He bent down and felt his knee-cap carefully.

"No, don't get married," I advised him. "But tell me, do you get many assignments like this one?"

"Yes, a great many. Miles makes a feature of scandal."

"And Miles," I sneered, "wants to be a reform governor!"

"He has reformed journalism a lot," said Gilbert, limping heavily at my side. "Isn't it amusing? A man degrades his own trade down to the lowest depths, and then, from down there in the mud, he shouts up his boasts to us of how he'd elevate this office or that if we'd but elect him to it."

He consulted his sheaf of yellow copy paper.

"Well, I've got to go over to Newark now," he sighed.

"What is your Newark assignment?"

"An interview with an elderly clergyman on—but no, I'm ashamed to tell you what it's on. Do you want to come with me?"

"I can't. I'm dining at the Tillinghast Corcorans."

"Good-bye then, old man," said Gilbert Allen.

We shook hands and he limped away. I watched him limp painfully up the grey iron stair of the elevated railroad. A descending woman shopper thrust him impatiently from her path, he disappeared, and I thought:

"Well, you, at least, haven't hardened to your work like Billy Wilkins."

III

AS my father and I drove that evening to the Tillinghast Corcorans' dinner dance, I discussed the work of big John Murray, Gilbert Allen and Billy Wilkins.

"A lot of work is useless," I concluded. "A lot of it is even harmful."

"Yes?" mused my father. "Yes, I suppose you're right." But my father's kind voice was puzzled and unconvinced. "Though work's work, after all, isn't it?"

"Oh, work's work," I agreed; "and so is play play. But one kind of play is lawn tennis, while another kind is whisky-drinking."

"I see," said my father. "And yet work's work, all the same. I don't do much of it myself. But, I tell you, Brian, I'm never happier than when hard at work—hard at work, say, on a magazine story."

In the little, luxurious brougham we drove on in silence. "Father will never see an unpleasant truth," I thought. "But Nature leads me up to every unpleasant truth there is, and, hang her, she rubs my nose in it."

Our brougham halted at a cross street. Gazing from the window, I saw an old woman pause to arrange the folds of an old man's black neckerchief. They were both very old. They had perhaps been married half a century. She was knotted and gnarled in her shawl. He, grey and gaunt, looked as desolate as frozen winter things—as frozen reeds protruding from a frozen stream in

the sad winter dusk. His life had been, of course, a failure; her life, depending on his, had been a failure likewise; yet she arranged his neckerchief with the affection and pride which a mother lavishes on a son. Yes, a mother's love for her son, her joy in him, her belief in the splendour of his future—there was all that in the old woman's air. And though the old man remained as desolate-looking as ever, yet something, I know not what, told me that the delicate and restrained caress of her touch comforted him a little. Who would have believed that this old man might ever hope for such a caress? Who could, indeed, have given him such a caress save the one old woman who had loved him since the time when he was young.—A last pat to the black neckerchief, and they resumed their slow, bent march; while I, leaning back in my seat, fell into a vague reverie, part amusement, part pity, part disdain.

"Poor things!" my father murmured. "Poor old things!"

A concert followed the Corcorans' dinner, and after the concert, when I approached Mrs. Corcoran to claim a waltz, she said:

"Suppose we sit this out?"

Then, taking my arm, she led me down a broad corridor, between rows of palms, to a little smoking-room hung with old rugs, and jewelled lamps, and inlaid arms. A soft ruby light suffused the smoking-room. We seated ourselves on a divan.

"Brian, you never take tea with me any more."

"Well, you see, I'm busy."

"And you've stopped riding in the park. I looked for you three mornings in the park this week."

"I'm so busy," I repeated.

"Busy! At what, pray?"

"Hunting honest work," said I.

There was a little space of silence. I lighted a cigarette. Mrs. Corcoran regarded me strangely. At thirty she was still beautiful, but from her beauty the soft, fresh glitter of youth was gone. From her manner, too, was gone youth's gaiety. Her calm, wise manner seemed to say, "I understand you as a chit of a girl could never do." But I had no desire to be understood. It made me feel too crude. My desire was to be mistaken for a libertine.

"Did you have a good time in Bermuda, Brian?"

I blushed. "Yes, pretty good."

With her wise, her too wise manner, she laughed and laid her hand on mine. "Poor boy!"

"Oh, you needn't pity me," I said.

She drew away hurriedly as her husband sauntered in.

"Hello, you here?" said Tillinghast Corcoran, and he gave a jovial laugh, while his anxious gaze studied his young wife and me, noting first the expression of our faces, noting next the proximity of our knees. With an air of relief, his scrutiny having discovered nothing suspicious, he added, "I thought I'd have a smoke." And he took out his cigar-case and sank, with a pompous grunt, on to an ottoman beside us.

But his wife said calmly:

"Hadn't you better give the supper one last look over, dear? You're so good at that sort of thing, you know."

"Heighho! Perhaps you're right."

And Tillinghast Corcoran put back his cigar-case, rose with another pompous grunt, and, nodding to us jovially again, withdrew, in his stupendous New York eve-

ning clothes, with the stupendous swagger of a New York buck. But, somehow, beneath his swagger, he looked tired, tired and old.

"Jealous?" said I.

She smiled. "Perhaps."

"You'd never be jealous of him, would you?"

"Why, of course I would!"

"Ho, ho, ho!" I laughed. For it seemed to me absurd that an unfaithful wife should mind her husband's infidelity.

The music of violins sounded in the distance. Now and then a young couple passed down the corridor slowly, the girl, lithe in her white dress, clinging to the arm of the erect, complacent, black-clad male.

"On the drive here," I said in a musing voice, "I saw a poor old woman arrange a poor old man's neckerchief in a dirty street. It seemed that the neckerchief did not cover enough of his poor old neck. So she drew it up here and she drew it down there. She gave little, caressing pats to its folds. She cocked her old grey head to study the effect."

Mrs. Corcoran frowned. "Well?" she said, "what of it?"

I answered awkwardly, feeling very priggish all of a sudden:

"Oh, nothing. Only it struck me, somehow, as fine. To think there was a woman to care for that old man—Yes, it struck me as fine."

"And it was fine," said Mrs. Corcoran. She leaned forward, her elbow on her knee, her cheek on her hand, regarding me in silence. "Fine, but common enough," she said.

"Not common enough; oh, no!" I cried.

But Mrs. Corcoran, still leaning forward, still resting her cheek upon her hand, insisted:

"Yes, common enough. In every marriage there are fine moments, beautiful moments, like that. You see, Brian, you are young, and you don't understand. Youth wants everything to be perfect. A thing must be perfect, or youth will have none of it. But what proof have you got of the perfection of that old couple's marriage? None at all, of course. For nothing is perfect. Marriage is not perfect. Friendship is not perfect. You, yourself, are you perfect?"

Wise words from pretty lips—could anything be more charming! And I gazed with admiration at that pretty face for once thoughtful, sincere and sad. And for the first time, on account of her sad sincerity, I really liked Mrs. Tillinghast Corcoran.

IV

WORK—why did the desire to work continually possess me? I was rich, I was lazy. Why, then, at dance or dinner, in theatre or country house, flirting with Mrs. Corcoran, or cantering in the park alone—why, then, this continual desire to work?

It must be that I wanted respect, my own respect and the respect of others. Idle and profligate, I was an object of contempt. But if I worked, then the world would respect me, and, as in my best and happiest years at school and college, I would respect myself.

Was not work, too, a shield against vice? He who loved his work might well withstand even the most beautiful vice, perceiving that he must withstand it, or his work would suffer. But vice, especially the vice of drink, found an easy victim in an idler like me; for, since I was of no use to anybody, what difference did it make whether I drank or not? It made, to be sure, this difference, that it pained my parents. But, alas, to spare my parents pain was not a motive strong enough to keep me out of vice. If I had, however, some important and absorbing work—

I entered the office of Jeremiah Ludlow. I purposed, rather doubtfully, to become a financier.

My duties, in Jeremiah's sumptuous office of mahogany, were slight. I dictated insignificant letters, received insignificant visitors, and ran insignificant errands. But

as my father's son I heard many conversations which were significant in the extreme.

He blamed it on a dead man. That, in the retrospect, seems to have been those conversations' keynote or refrain. For in the world of finance where I now moved, legalized thefts were continually occurring, one of these thefts was continually being discovered, and the thief, when haled before his robbed and helpless stockholders, was continually declaring, in a tone half whine and half defiance, that not he, but some dead man—the former president, the former treasurer—had done the deed.

He blamed it on a dead man.. The excuse would amuse, disgust and impress the financial world, and like acid it would rot still deeper the already rotten fibres of the financial world's code.

In his spacious office, his lofty, airy office with its mahogany wainscoting, its great, pale Persian rug and massive spittoons of brass, Jeremiah would say to Tillinghast Corcoran:

"He blamed it on a dead man!"

"He blamed it on a dead man!" Tillinghast would reply.

And the two financiers would laugh angrily, contemptuously; but at the same time they would exchange across a huge spittoon a long, strange, enigmatic look. The enigma of that look, however, was easy enough for me to read.

Over our down-town luncheon of pickles and fried oysters a clerk in sage green, with cravat, handkerchief and socks all of a delicate pink, would shrug his shoulders and say, "He blamed it on a dead man." And here again, beneath the jocular scorn of the ambitious

youth's manner, something enigmatic—a fervent hope, perhaps—would lurk.

"He blamed it on a dead man," one shabby old bookkeeper would say over my shoulder from his high stool to another shabby old bookkeeper on a similar high stool behind me. And hunched like grey, tired monkeys on their lofty perches, they laughed into enormous ledgers. But surely there was regret in their cracked laughter. "If we, too—" their cracked laughter said, "if we, too, when we were young, had but consented to cheat and steal— It is, however, too late now."

As for the financiers who had blamed dead men, they would go about for a week or so with a chastened air, as if they had lost a relation—a not too near relation, a stepson, say, or mother-in-law. But, in a week or so, the scandal would be forgotten, and they would resume again their jaunty air of power and success. Their top hats tilted rakishly, their long cigars slanting rakishly upward from the corner of their lips, they would meet as of yore with loud and pompous laughter, wringing one another's hands, slapping one another's backs, and darting in search of admiration shy glances, just as of yore, at one another's beautiful, scornful typewriter girls of sixteen or seventeen years.

V

MILTOUN MOWBRAY, the famous critic and essayist, was tall, thin, graceful; a man of forty-five or fifty, with grey, thick curls neatly cropped, a thin face, dark moustache, and romantic eyes.

"How do you do, Mr. Banaker? And this is Mr. Allen!"

He advanced with almost effeminate grace. His voice was deep and musical. He held the manuscript of Gilbert's novel in his hand.

"Mr. Allen," he said, "I salute you. There is genius in *The Morass*."

Almost weeping for joy, Gilbert stammered:

"Genius! Oh, no. Hard work, not genius."

"Genius," repeated Milton Mowbray, in his deep, sad voice. "Genius. And yet——"

He moved languidly to the window. He stood and looked forth in a dream.

"Affected," I thought. "Why bother, at his age, to be affected? And that 'And yet——'" What the devil does he mean with his 'And yet'?"

In a revulsion from work and love, work as symbolized by Jeremiah Ludlow, love as symbolized by Alfred Earle, I had turned to Gilbert as a symbol of honest, noble and inspiring effort. And after reading the manuscript of his brief book, I had resolved to take up his cause, I had resolved to help establish him in literature.

The Morass, as the world now admits, is a work of art. In it Gilbert struck a new note, set a new standard, of beautiful and direct simplicity. He showed his brother writers that a page could say—could say profoundly and gracefully—what had hitherto required a chapter.

"How did you do it?" I asked, remembering his wretched magazine stories.

"Well," he said, "I suppose my secret is that I can tell good work from bad. Yes, I can tell a good sentence, a good paragraph, a good chapter, from a bad one, as you can tell a good from a bad billiard shot. And so, in *The Morass*, I crossed out and re-wrote every bad chapter, every bad paragraph, every bad sentence, till it was good, as you might try a billiard shot over and over till you got it." He frowned. "But there were shots here and there I couldn't get; so I left them out altogether. That is what makes my book a little fragmentary."

"Oh, it isn't fragmentary," I assured him. "But how did you come to abandon your magazine rot?"

"We've got Mabel to thank for that," he answered, with a lover's fatuous smile.

For he was now betrothed. His fiancée, Mabel Hunter, was the daughter of his boarding-mistress. Mabel was a robust and pretty girl of nineteen, with a capable, active, challenging air that depressed me, an air that seemed to say, "Get on or get out. Get on or get out."

Gilbert, before writing *The Morass*, had devoted all his leisure to magazine stories. Every morning from nine to twelve in his bedroom he had worked on love stories with happy endings for the magazines. Rejected unanimously thus far, these stories still went the rounds.

And they deserved to go the rounds, for they were

bad. Bad? They were even worse than the stories the magazines accepted. For the accepted stories, based on commonplace themes and written by commonplace minds, had a ring of sincerity, whereas Gilbert's stories, in which his fine talent could take no interest, rang false. If, then, forsaking such stories, he should prove himself—prove himself by writing his very best—by writing, say, a novel after his own heart, a novel that aimed solely to be beautiful—

"Yes, write a novel, of course," said Mabel Hunter firmly. "That will settle the matter once for all."

And Gilbert, enrapt in her fresh and robust beauty, felt that her hard, challenging air, her "Get on or get out" air, was the very stimulus he needed.

So he wrote his novel. It was short, twelve short chapters, and it had already, when I saw it, been rejected by the three leading publishers of New York.

I showed *The Morass* to my father and mother. My father shook his head and frowned. My mother, on the other hand, wept over Gilbert's tragic book.

My mother gave me a letter to Denton, but Denton was in Italy, and hence we could not get the opinion of our greatest novelist on *The Morass*. My father then gave me a letter to Miltoun Mowbray, critic, editor, essayist, reader to McCurdy's, etc.

Gilbert said he had absolute faith in Denton alone; but Miltoun Mowbray was famous and successful (famous and successful, that is, according to the standards of New York) and though Gilbert had never read any of his books (I found out afterwards that no one had ever read any of his books) still, perhaps, from such an authority, a criticism of some value might be obtained.

• • • • •

"And yet——"

Gilbert and I exchanged an anxious frown. But Miltoun Mowbray smiled upon us from his window, and we met his smile with youth's humble, shy, submissive look.

"I can't advise McCurdy's to bring out *The Morass*," said Miltoun Mowbray.

"But," I remonstrated, "you said there was genius in it."

Miltoun Mowbray returned to his desk chair. I could see that our humble, shy, submissive look flattered him. Leaning comfortably back, his knees crossed, the tips of his fingers together, he began cheerily:

"Genius, yes. And you will write some day, Mr. Allen, a book I shall be proud to publish. But *The Morass*—well, frankly, *The Morass* won't do."

Gilbert, very pale, said in a low, faint voice:

"Do you advise me to destroy it?"

"What's that?"

"Do you advise me to destroy it?"

"I advise you not to bring it out."

"But," said I, "it's a good book."

Miltoun Mowbray frowned at me. He said bitterly: "A good book? There we differ. *The Morass*, with all its promise, is not a good book."

"What's wrong with it?"

Miltoun Mowbray frowned at me again. Then he happened to glance at Gilbert. Gilbert, pale, crushed, with downcast eyes, seemed on the verge of a collapse. And as Miltoun Mowbray regarded Gilbert, all his good-humour returned. He ran over the pages of *The Morass* gaily.

"What is wrong with it?" he said. "Well, take this

paragraph—where the girl enters the restaurant—this paragraph about her—er—her ankle.”

He looked at Gilbert reproachfully. Gilbert hung his head.

“This, really, about the ankle——”

Miltoun Mowbray struck the paragraph a resounding blow with his fist.

“Why, one might think, from this paragraph——”

And he paused, he sniffed, in disgust. Then he said, “Pah!”

“I could cut all that out,” murmured Gilbert.

“Why should you cut it out?” I cried. “Is a pretty ankle any worse to describe than a pretty mouth?”

“We’ve got to draw the line somewhere,” said Gilbert, with a submissive glance towards Miltoun Mowbray.

“America, let us remember,” said the editor-critic-essayist, “stands for untainted fiction. We stand for the breezy, the wholesome. Uplift. No sex rubbish.”

“I am going to cut out the ankle paragraph, you know,” said Gilbert. “Otherwise,” he added wistfully, “do you find my book all right?”

“No,” said Miltoun Mowbray. “No, I don’t.”

“Tell us just what’s wrong with it,” said I.

“Yes, do tell me,” said Gilbert anxiously. “I want to know. I want help.”

Here was that humble submission which Miltoun Mowbray loved. Basking in it, he crossed his legs again, he put his finger-tips together again, and he said cheerily:

“Well, your hero is wrong. Your hero is sordid. He’s a drunkard, awencher, even a bit of a coward. That never does for a hero. For a minor character, yes. But not for a hero.”

He paused impressively, fixing on Gilbert his dark, romantic eyes. Then he resumed:

"You should have had a strong hero, Mr. Allen. Thus, by contrast, you'd have brought out your drunkard's defects. And the book would have ended on a note of hope, of uplift."

Yes, his good humour was all come back. Knees crossed, finger-tips joined, he smiled kindly on the despair that he had wrought.

"And you altogether forgot your love interest! Why, Mr. Allen, what were you thinking about? A novel without a love interest is like an egg without salt. The love interest——"

"But, Mr. Mowbray," I interrupted, "is there any love interest in *Robinson Crusoe*?"

"Do you compare *The Morass* with *Robinson Crusoe*?" He gave me a look of contempt. Then he resumed his literary lecture. "The stupid hypocrite!" I thought.

"Yes, I would destroy *The Morass* in toto." Miltoun Mowbray smiled his cheery smile. "I would destroy it in toto and start afresh. Wholesome books, don't you know, Mr. Allen, with a strong, clean love interest—wholesome, helpful, pure books—that is what the world needs to-day—books that leave a pleasant taste in——"

We departed with our rejected manuscript sadly.

VI

"**I**F nothing I can say will cheer you up," I cried, "come into this shop and buy a Mowbray book. That will give his calibre. That will show what value his opinions have."

But we were obliged to visit half a dozen shops before a single one of Miltoun Mowbray's books could be found. It was a book of critical essays. We carried it to Gilbert's boarding-house, and there I read the essay on Ruskin aloud. How we laughed!

The essay on Ruskin restored Gilbert's equanimity. He now perceived that Miltoun Mowbray's literary opinions were ludicrous. He still insisted, though, on cutting from *The Morass* the description of his heroine's ankle. Such effect has criticism, even ludicrous criticism on an artist's sensitive mind.

"But to think," he said, "of that ass telling any one how to write! To think of that ass standing with his club at the portals of literature!"

A weird music rolled suddenly its deep and grave reverberations through the boarding-house.

"The Chinese gong," said Gilbert. "You've got to stay for supper."

We descended to a neat and ugly dining-room. We seated ourselves at a long, narrow table. Mabel and a herculean Swedish maid, flat-faced and of a muddy blonde complexion, served us.

"You are very comfortable here," I said, and I looked

up and down two parallel lines of bookkeepers, school-teachers, widows, and childless married couples.

A grey-bearded clergyman opposite me said, "We hope to take the Southern rowt—route, rather," and, catching my eye, he smiled in friendly fashion over the error he had redeemed.

"Steak or chops?" Mabel murmured, bending over my left shoulder.

The supper was excellent—stewed oysters, steak or chops, and prunes and cup-cake by way of sweet. Yes, the supper was excellent, but the portions were very, very small. Not once daring to ask for a second portion—nobody dared to ask for a second portion—I found it difficult to get enough to eat.

And I glanced at Mabel, wondering how she had the face to give portions of such disgraceful smallness.

But Mabel, pretty and robust, sped to and fro with the capable, superior and righteous air of one who is giving unduly large portions. Her legs, too short, made her walk hurried and jerky. But her black bodice set off the superb young shoulders, the firm, full bosom, and the supple waist. Her small mouth was red and fresh like a flower in the pale, healthy, somewhat broad face. Her brown, small eyes seemed rather sensual.

"She's a manager," Gilbert murmured. "The place is paying since she took it over."

"Is that so?"

"She got rid of all the old-timers, the bohemian newspaper gang. You see, they didn't square up regularly, and, besides, they gave the place a bad name. It took nerve to get rid of them—they were like old friends. She did it, though. She had to. She's a strong character. Not like me."

My old clergyman said, "The bears in the park are very interesting, and they—er—they observe all the proprieties."

He caught my eye and smiled again. "All the proprieties," he repeated.

After supper Mabel and Gilbert and I retired to Mrs. Hunter's sitting-room. Mabel listened very gravely there to the account of our conference with Miltoun Mowbray. She gave Gilbert, on hearing Miltoun Mowbray's condemnation of *The Morass*, a searching look. "You must get this thing settled, one way or the other, immediately," she said; and he nodded in eager, humble obedience to her command.

"You must get this thing settled," Mabel had said. And now, while Gilbert pursued his scandalous newspaper stories, I took *The Morass* from publisher to publisher. But seven publishers in turn refused the book.

As *The Morass* grew more and more tattered, Mabel's air grew more and more capable, hard and challenging. "Get on or get out," it said. "Get on or get out." Gilbert, of course, had again lost all faith in his book and in himself. But ever and anon he took up the soiled manuscript and read one of the brief chapters. Then his cheeks flushed, his clear blue eyes flamed, and he cried, striking the typewritten page with white, thin fist, "By God, how can they fail to see that this is beautiful!"

I resolved at last to bring out *The Morass* myself. My father and Jeremiah Ludlow would have dissuaded me. They said the critics would think that, since no publisher would bring it out, it must be far below the average novel. But I retorted that the average novel

was down at the bottom, the very bottom, and nothing could get below it save a tunnel.

We brought out an edition of two thousand copies. The edition cost us twenty-five cents a volume. We sold it, wholesale, at seventy-five cents a volume. Its retail price was the familiar "dollar twelve."

Of course it did not sell at all till the reviews began. The reviews! The first review ridiculed Gilbert. The first reviewer seemed to think that Gilbert was holding up his sorry hero as a model to be emulated.

"The ass!" said I.

But Gilbert, very red, smiled sheepishly. "He doesn't get my drift. Have I failed to make my meaning clear?" he stammered.

"No, no," said I. "The fellow's just an ass."

And Mabel, looking up from the first review, gazed at us doubtfully. For once her hard, challenging air had disappeared. This reviewer misunderstood Gilbert, Mabel could see that for herself.

There followed three other reviews—jocular, puzzled ones. Here the reviewers could not fathom Gilbert's new manner. They liked it, only they were afraid to say so; and over their gay and guarded phrases Gilbert and I exchanged a worried frown, while Mabel assumed once more her hard air of challenge. "Well, anyhow, you've still got your place on *The Dispatch*," she said. *The Morass*, of course, was not selling at all.

But now Charles Palmer in *The Globe* wrote a review of singular intelligence and enthusiasm, welcoming *The Morass* as a truly remarkable novel. Charles Palmer's brothers took their cue from him, and that week the half-dozen leading New York papers gave us, almost simultaneously, long reviews of the highest praise.

Straightway *The Morass* began to sell. Orders rained upon us, and this pleasant rain grew daily heavier. We sold, without any canvassing, one, two, three hundred volumes a week. It was delightful.

And the reviews kept getting longer and better—columns in the newspapers, pages in the magazines—while Gilbert's photograph, taken by a fashionable photographer gratis, appeared in a dozen cities.

But Denton—what did Denton think? An advance copy had been sent him, and after a long, disheartening silence Denton at last wrote from Florence a superb review for *The New Weekly*. This review, the verdict of our leading writer, gave Gilbert at once a permanent place in modern letters.

Denton returned, and we dined with him at his flat in Washington Square.Flushed with our triumph, the poverty of Denton's flat took us aback. These small, dark rooms, these threadbare and faded hangings—were these the rewards of literature?

Denton's grey hair and grey moustache had an indefinable grace. A thin man of sixty or sixty-five, there was something about him at once very elegant, simple and childlike. He had a way of falling into reverie. You literally saw the dreams rising, rising like mists, in his clear eyes. You then broke off your remark, for it was plain that Denton no longer heard you. The silence, after a little while, recalled him to himself. The mist of dreams that had hid you from him vanished, he gave a start, he looked at you in guilty alarm, and his smile, sheepish, apologetic, charming, humbly begged you to repeat what you had said.

Over our simple dinner, cooked and set before us by an old serving-woman, Denton and Gilbert talked of their

art reverently and joyously, like two mediæval monks talking of their faith.

"You have a beautiful life before you," Denton said, "a golden life." He frowned down on the thin, grey, stringy beefsteak which he was carving. "But I would advise you to live abroad. Poverty, over there, is less embittering."

At the word "poverty" Gilbert's face fell, and he gave me a helpless look. I cried:

"Poverty? But why poverty?"

Denton smiled and answered:

"Art has nothing to do with money. The publisher therefore shuns the artist. The publisher seeks the men who write 'best-selling' trash for him."

"There's not much chance for me, then, eh?" said Gilbert uneasily.

"You have your dreams," said Denton. "But, from the financial point of view, there is not much chance for you."

"Good writers should publish their own books," said I.

"Good writers do publish their own first books perforce, as in the case of *The Morass*," Denton replied. "But it's the same everywhere. In London there's a young man named Bernard Shaw who is writing comedies that are jewels—jewels. But Irving, Wyndham, nobody will stage Shaw's comedies. Shaw, poor fellow, would starve but for journalism."

VII

M^Y mother invited Gilbert and Mabel to spend at Banaker House the week-end preceding their marriage now. McCurdy's, through Miltoun Mowbray, had promised Gilbert an advance royalty of a thousand dollars on his new novel, and all the magazines were begging him for stories hungrily. At Mabel's suggestion, and rather against his own judgment, Gilbert was selling to the magazines, at twenty-five dollars apiece, those very stories which for two long years they had rejected.

Gilbert and Mabel had plenty of money—three thousand dollars, in fact—and the new novel would be finished in a twelvemonth. They were to sail the evening of their wedding, for Boston, whence they would embark for Genoa on a slow Cunarder. It was their purpose to live in Venice. They had in mind an apartment in an old marble palace on the Grand Canal.

Banaker House amused more than it impressed Mabel. She smiled before its delicate and mellow splendours.

"You're smiling!" I said to her. "I shan't show you anything more."

"I was not smiling!" she retorted sharply. We did not like each other at all.

My father at dinner, complimented Gilbert on *The Morass*. "But," my father said, "life is so sad—especially as you grow older you find life so sad—why not write books that uplift us a little?"

"There are enough sentimentalists writing 'uplift' rot," said I.

My father flushed and frowned down at his plate.

"Forgive me, father," I said. "I know you don't mean sentimental books."

"No, no; of course not. I mean books like *Two Kisses*."

And my father, very distinguished in his evening dress, with his lean, sunburnt face and his thin hair powdered with grey—my father smiled gaily upon me a forgiveness humble, grateful, touching.

But Mabel gave me a cold glance.

"I like cheerful books, too," she said. "And we're going to write cheerful books. We're going to write a best seller."

At Mabel's early use of the marital "we" my mother and I exchanged a wink.

But Gilbert was silent and nervous. A tiny frown puckered his brow. He kept his lids lowered and drank a good deal. Now and then the discussion seemed to rouse him, and his eyes, radiant and gay with intelligence, met mine. The next moment, however, they clouded again, he sighed, and sat once more with lowered lids and puckered brow, draining his glass hurriedly as often as it was filled.

And at his wedding he made such a sorry bridegroom that I laughed at him. I see him as I write—the tall, thin figure; the ill-fitting, black frock coat; the new grey trousers, too long, too pale, falling in great folds about his ankles; the white silk cravat; and above the cravat the white, small face twitching nervously, and the lowered eyes that, when they looked up, had in them something wistful and helpless—a kind of helpless question-

ing, which I rebuffed with loud, cruel laughter. Loud, cruel laughter—but is not the frightened bridegroom always fair game for mirth?

Denton and I, the only outsiders present, lunched, after the ceremony, in Broadway. We lunched beside a window. It was a grey December day, a grey, bleak, cheerless day, enlivened now and then with a mad white flurry of snowflakes.

"Well," I said, squeezing a half-lemon over my caviare, "I don't envy Gilbert."

"I don't envy him, either," Denton replied.

"He's horribly frightened, isn't he?"

"We're all frightened on our wedding day."

"But," I said, "Gilbert is altogether ignorant of women."

And I studied Denton to see how he would take this indelicate, this repulsive truth. He took it rather hard at first. He frowned at his glass of white wine, which he twirled round and round by the stem. Then, with a shrug, he said:

"How do you know? Did he ever tell you?"

I answered, "Such things are never told. But one knows, all the same."

"Gilbert is a wonderful chap," mused Denton. "Some of his prose doesn't seem like mere writing. It seems as if bitten with acid into bronze."

But I would not let Denton change the subject in this manner.

"Gilbert," I said, "is entering marriage pure, as we pretend it's best to enter marriage. Why this pretence?"

Denton frowned. He finished his egg in silence. Then he said:

"I think it is a good thing for a young man to be pure."

"Why, then," said I, "are we ashamed of our purity—so ashamed that we deny it?"

He laughed. "Young men do deny it sometimes, don't they?"

"They always deny it." I gave Denton a lamb cutlet. "Always."

"Well," said Denton with another laugh, "what would you do about it?"

"Do? Dear knows!" I answered. "My father thinks that earlier marriages, perhaps—"

"Pahaw! To link for life a lad and a girl—No, it would be too cruel."

"Don't make the link a life one, then," said I.

Dreams rose like mist in Denton's eyes, and he finished his lunch in silence. But afterwards, over our coffee, his eyes cleared again; they looked into mine with a grave directness; and, dropping his reserve, he talked a long time, in a low voice, about love.

But Denton's talk failed to satisfy me; for, like all talk based on truth, it was timid, uncertain, and even contradictory here and there.

"My dear wife," he began, "has been dead three years. The part she played in my life was such that—that now, since her death—I have no future." As if to brush away something intolerable, he made a helpless, angry gesture which seemed unspeakably sad. "I have no future."

"Ours was what is called a happy marriage." His voice fell almost to a whisper. "We were untrue to each other, but we forgave each other. To think"—Denton smiled dolorously, a contorted smile which made

him look very wrinkled and grey and old—"to think I was once ashamed of having forgiven my dear dead wife! Yes, ours was a happy, a most happy marriage, on the whole. And yet—

"The muddle man has made of love!

"Starving for love, we give it a beauty and an importance it does not, perhaps, possess—like men starving for food, you know—but, once the food hunger is satisfied, eating falls back into its proper place, a lowly place. And so, if we could satisfy our love hunger, if we could remove the various love restrictions—"

"Free love," said I, in an awed voice. "Free love is what you mean, isn't it?"

Denton, with a perplexed frown, answered slowly:

"Yea. But we're not fit for it yet. We shan't be fit for it for a long time yet. Not till all men and all women, alike working, are alike independent. Not till our love contracts, or marriages, begin to be based on love's uncertainty instead of on its permanency."

"And when will that time come?" I asked eagerly.
"In a hundred years!"

"Maybe never." And Denton shrugged his shoulders. He mused a moment. He weighed, he doubted. Then—

"It is easy," he said, "easy to dream dreams of what love might mean to us. I dream of a world where marriage begins as soon as desire begins, but marriage here is based on love's uncertainty, it ends when love ends, and marriages of a day, a year, or a lifetime, are all, equally, honourable. No lies, no infidelities, no deceptions. Oh, yes, it is easy to dream dreams, but we have made love more a source of sorrow and sin than a source of joy."

Signs swung and rattled amid a mad white gust of

snowflakes. Heads bent before the blast. Blown-off hats, careering like hoops, were pursued gaily.

As I gathered up my change I said, "Poor Gilbert!"
We laughed.

"And that girl!" said Denton. "So ignorant, so hard! If it were a woman of experience now—"

That evening, over my book, I pondered Denton's words with a strange complacency. I felt as proud of Denton's ideas as if they were my own. But I carried them further than Denton. I had none of Denton's doubts. And I resolved, for my part, to marry rationally, if I ever married, giving to my wife and guarding for myself the most perfect freedom.

With the complacent and virtuous smile of the reformer, I set off at midnight, a book under my arm, for a sandwich and a bottle of beer downstairs. But as I passed my mother's door I heard the sound of weeping.

I paused. My mother wept:

"I am so afraid about his future, dear."

"I am not afraid." My father spoke gently. "He is young yet. And he is honest and sincere."

"But—"

My mother sobbed. I could hear my father's hand—pat, pat—upon her shoulder.

"But," she sobbed, "I am beginning to grow old. I should like to see—to see him—settled. I know he isn't really bad, for all they say about him. The Sterlings have omitted him for the third time from their dance, and he got no card for the Winthrop ball. But that is not what worries me. I know he won't become a drunkard, like—like Charles. But his associations! Alfred Earle—that high-spirited, handsome boy—dying of dissipation!—If only we were not so rich! Then he

would have an aim in life. Or if you, perhaps, were stricter——”

“No!” my father cried. “Force I won’t use. And if I questioned him, it would only make him lie, perhaps.”

Again my mother wept. Again my father’s hand patted her shoulder.

I stole back upstairs. I had forgotten my beer and sandwich. “How strange,” I thought sheepishly, “how strange that, while I feel capable of reforming the whole world, my father and mother deem me incapable of living my own little life aright.” Well, my father and mother were wrong, of course: as they were wrong about Alfred Earle, who stood in no danger of dying: but their unselfish fears and sorrows troubled me. All the next day I was unhappy. The shadow of a calamity seemed to lie upon me.

Hence it was, perhaps, that the news of Gilbert Allen’s suicide did not come as an overwhelming shock. It came as a shock for which I had been in some mysterious way prepared.

He killed himself upon his wedding night. He leapt in a snowstorm into the dark sea.

An old sailor saw him last alive. It was very late. Wrapped in his overcoat, his shoulders powdered with snow, he conversed with the old sailor absently.

“Is the sea very cold,” he asked, “on such a night as this?”

“No, sir,” the sailor answered. “It don’t feel very cold on such a night. I once went overboard in winter, and it was queer how warm the water felt.”

Then Gilbert, a lonely figure in the pale, soft flurry of the storm, resumed his quiet march.

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He could not swim. I was glad to remember that.
And the sea, on such a night, would not feel cold.

Love, I surmised, had come to Gilbert Allen in hideous
form, in horrible form, and all that dark, pure water
had hardly seemed enough to wash him clean.



BOOK V

I

AFTER Gilbert Allen's death I lived, until I fell in love, a life so strange and lonely that it gained me the name of a recluse. "Oh, he has become a recluse," people said, with a significant smile and a significant tapping of the forehead. And when he returned from Asia Fatty Kerr exclaimed, on being told of Gilbert's suicide: "Incredible! If it had been that damned recluse now——"

I had Banaker House all to myself, my father and mother having taken for the winter, at an exorbitant rental, Count Martelli's beautiful, tumbledown villa in San Remo. While my father and mother entertained the Italian Riviera colony amid flowers and palms and sunshine, I turned night into day, alone in Banaker House, amid blizzards, ice and snow.

An old man-servant looked after me, and my life, at first, was normal. I rose at eight o'clock; Bellick served my grape-fruit and rolls and coffee before the fire in the library; and over the meal I now read my newspaper, I now looked out on white fields sparkling in the winter sunshine. After breakfast I took a long walk in the cold, pure air on the hard-packed and ringing snow of empty roads. On my return Bellick had my luncheon ready, a simple luncheon—eggs, a cutlet, salad, fruit.

There followed a strong and fragrant cup of coffee, and I fell to reading before the fire. Youth is the time for reading; youth sees a book's beauties without seeing any of its faults; and I read on and on delightedly till my seven o'clock dinner, which I concluded with another cup of coffee. Then, lighting a cigarette, I took up my book again. A long, long evening of enchantment lay before me. The birch logs flamed, and in the serene silence, in the golden lamplight, my mind seemed preternaturally keen. Hour after hour I thrilled, like a violin, to the splendours of Tolstoy, Dostoyevsky, Swinburne.

Alone, with no rules to obey, I soon got to sleeping all day and reading all night. Strange, joyous nights—at one or two o'clock I made coffee in a silver filter—hour after hour of golden lamplight and serene silence wherein my mind seemed to escape from my body, and I reviewed life calmly as from a peak in outer space.

To make the world happy, I perceived, poverty must be abolished, marriage must be abolished, war must be abolished, the Christian religion must be abolished. How, though, effect those abolitions? I did not know; I could not see; and I turned from the world with a sense of boredom. For me, the world's superior, for me the life of a recluse—nocturnal walks, nocturnal thoughts—and the daytime, when the world was up and doing, I would spend abed.

Meanwhile on me, its superior, the world smiled, as is its wont, and it significantly tapped its forehead.

At the winter's end I fell in love.

I first saw her in the pink haze of a February sunset gliding swiftly in a sleigh through a hushed, snow-covered, desolate land.

I had risen that afternoon at four, I had breakfasted

at five, then I had set out on a long walk before my eight o'clock luncheon.

The air was cold and still. Far off across white slopes the sun, a disc of incandescent red, sank lower and lower. It disappeared at last; it disappeared very smoothly, very quietly; but down below where it had gone it seemed to stir up at once a tremendous conflagration. Rare, clear colours, green and rose and gold, were flung in enormous and fantastic patterns over the sky. The western snowfields glowed with a faint flush. And against the sunset splendour the trees uplifted their bare boughs in weird, black arabesque sadly.

I turned on hearing the gay sound of sleigh-bells.

Driven by an enormous coachman, a two-horse sleigh, with rich furs flying, passed quickly, and, as it passed, her clear and brilliant eyes met mine, she gave me an imperceptible smile, and delight, delight so poignant it resembled pain, shot through my heart.

Her eyes were merry and yet very tender. Her fresh lips, slightly smiling, revealed the delicious snow of her teeth. Her beautiful face, flushed and oval, suggested elegance, daring, joy.

I stood and looked after her as she glided swiftly down the snow-covered road in the pink haze. Her beauty flowed like music through my being. It made me strangely happy, strangely desolate.

II

WH0 was she? That evening, after my eight o'clock luncheon, I sent old Bellick into Banakerburg to discover, if he could, her name. Then, before the fire, I fell into a muse.

To be worthy of her! I blew forth a cloud of smoke, I heaved a sigh, and, gazing into the flame, I considered my imperfections mournfully.

During my sophomore year I had been a runner, swift and brown and strong. But now, thanks to my unnatural hours, I was pale and thin. Furthermore, young as I still remained, certain detestable signs of manhood, of maturity, were already beginning to appear, like stains, upon my youth. I did not want to become a man, a mature man, a pater-familias. I wanted to remain young, young like the young gods of Greek sculpture, for love is decorous in youth only—imagine a statue, a Rodin *Baiser*, say, wherein the nude love-makers are middle-aged! But already, alas, my hair was receding a little at the temples. Already a dark growth was spreading over my chest. Already there were premonitory signs of the coarse tufts that in old age would protrude from nostrils and ears. These incipient horrors, thank God, were still too faint to be distinguished by any save myself. None, for example, had yet said that my hair was receding (what pain, what intolerable pain, would be mine on hearing that first said!), but I

knew well that youth, the youth of the Greek marbles, was departing, and I brooded over the knowledge with grief and fear.

Yet I was in love, and love heartened me as conversion heartened the Christian of the past. And like the Christian who, knowing his unworthiness, still purified his body and his mind for Paradise, I, though unworthy, would now purify my mind and body for a girl, trusting in her tenderness, her smiling tenderness.

I decided to recover the ruddy brown hue and the supple strength of my sophomore year. Accordingly I would at once abandon my unnatural hours, and, rising early, I would devote every morning to vigorous exercise in the winter sunshine. I would also, beginning with to-morrow, give up tobacco and alcohol. And I would have no further intercourse with—

A knock, and Bellick entered with his tray to serve my dinner.

"Well, Bellick, what luck!"

"Good luck, I hope, sir."

I began to tremble. "Never mind the chicken, Bellick—I can see to that. Sit down before the fire. You must be cold, man. And help yourself to wine and a cigar."

Old Bellick, murmuring his modest thanks, filled a glass with Chambertin and lighted an Irving-Fletcher Corona.

"Now," said I, "who is she?"

"Was the sleigh red, sir?"

"Yea."

"With black bearskin robes?"

"Black robes, yes—they probably were bearskin."

"And the coachman was enormous?"

"Oh, enormous."

"Then, sir, the sleigh belongs to Christopher Columbus Muller."

"The copper magnate, eh?"

"Yes, sir. And the young lady, sir, is Miss Marcelle Tohr, the daughter of Fernando Tohr of Philadelphia, ex-ambassador to the court of St. James's."

"Aha!"

I carved the white breast of the chicken in ragged lumps nervously. In pouring the Chambertin I tipped the wicker cradle too soon, spilling several glassfuls of wine over the cloth. Bellick rose with a shocked cry, and, hiding his cigar out of respect, he covered the red wine stain with a napkin.

"Thank you, Bellick," I said. "You may as well turn in now."

"Thank you, sir. Good night, sir."

"Good night, Bellick."

A daughter of Fernando Tohr, eh? The Tohrs were a very old family. Had I not heard that they belonged to the ducal Tohrlonia family of Italy? I frowned uneasily. The Banakers, however, were a very old family too. I must not forget the Princes of Powys. Perhaps the Princes of Powys (seventh century, Wales) would counterbalance the Tohrlonias in the proud eyes of Fernando.

Idle thoughts, silly thoughts, and, unable to eat, I pushed away my plate of chicken.

I turned in at one, and of course I could not sleep. Now I read, now I tossed, now I lit my light and read again. At six at last sleep overcame me. I was drugged with sleep as with opium when Bellick called me on the stroke of eight.

To throw off my load of sleep was hard. My eyes smarted. My head, heavy and dizzy, ached. Nevertheless, true to my resolve, I rose, and after breakfast, I wrote to my old friend Muller an incoherent letter about Marcelle. Then, with a dismal yawn, I went out on to the portico to exercise.

Before me in the sunshine the snow-covered landscape rolled gently downwards to the sea. On the river's narrow black curve the little black figures of skaters glided stiffly. Here and there a sleigh crawled along the white road; it was so distant that I could not hear its bells. The sea was a line of sapphire mist.

"Marcelle Tohr," I murmured. "Marcelle Tohr. What a beautiful name!" And I lay down on the marble portico and lifted my legs straight up, the knees stiff, twenty times. "Marcelle—Marcelle Tohr." I sat erect, and twenty times I bent my body back till my head touched the floor. "The name is beautiful," I panted, "but the girl is far more beautiful. How become worthy of her?" And I hopped, first on the right leg, then on the left, up and down the long portico vigorously.

III

I OPENED the first letter of my mail, a huge, blue letter sealed with a gold seal. The thick paper, rough and yet lustrous, resembled vellum; the seal was a fine gold scarab; and on the great blue envelope, in a small, upright, picturesque hand, my address was written precisely in the middle, leaving large margins equally spaced at top and bottom, and on right and left. And the single sheet of paper within proved, on unfolding, to be as big as foolscap; its edges were "deckle"; and here again, as in a book of "precious" verse, the margins were enormous.

Muller said:

"I was glad, my dear Brian, to get your letter. It was not, of course, written for my sake. But I was glad to get it, none the less.

"For I have not forgotten how nobly, how generously, you fought Sheridan in my behalf at Peabody. What though he did lick you? I have always wanted to be your friend.

"Yes, Marcelle Tohr is lovely. She is visiting my sister. The two girls were classmates at Miss Baldwin's school. Marcelle is a great Philadelphia aristocrat. Of course you know her father, Fernando Tohr, our ambassador to London under Grover Cleveland.

"Come to-morrow at five o'clock for tea. You will

like Marcelle. She is as gay and kind as she is beautiful. She is as gay and kind as a little song.

"OLIVER MULLER."

Sheridan had licked me, eh? What a lie! But my annoyance over this lie vanished before the joyous thought that I would meet Marcelle to-day.

To-day—to-day, then, I would meet her. A thrill of delight and dread ran through me. I summoned old Bellick, and together we chose with slow and anxious care for my début a perfectly-cut morning coat of the softest texture, a pair of peculiarly graceful boots with grey cloth tops, a shirt, white with a fine brown stripe, of the crispest, thinnest linen, a very heavy linen collar, a tie of extraordinarily rich silk, my smartest hat, etc.

I had slept well, I felt well, but in my joy and dread I could eat no luncheon. I saw continually Marcelle's beautiful, flushed face, the swiftly gliding sleigh, the pink haze of sunset above a desolate, snow-covered land. And my omelet choked me, my beefsteak choked me. In my nervousness I took a cigarette. But no—And, true to my vow, I dropped the cigarette back among its fellows in the silver box.

When I drove up that afternoon to Muller's grey, enormous, mediæval house in Madison Avenue, I saw the young man standing with the two girls at a mediæval window. He waved his hand, I waved mine in answer, and then, with a roguish smile, Marcelle waved her hand, too.

Muller advanced behind two men-servants in the grey, mediæval hall. He wore, like me, a morning coat, but a black stock encircled his round white throat, and on his wrist there was a gold bracelet in the form of a

snake. He was tall, large, very handsome. The texture of his flesh was as fine as a girl's. But his hips were too full, there was something effeminate in his walk, about him floated a delicate perfume.

"How glad I am to see you," he said, extending his white, strong hand.

"You have a fine place here," said I.

And indeed the mediæval furniture—the refectory tables of black oak, the chests, the Flemish hangings—made a harmony both rare and beautiful.

With his effeminate walk he led me in amongst the rich splendours of a Louis Quatorze drawing-room. There were sombre tapestries upon the walls. There were huge, tapestry-covered armchairs of old carved walnut. The rugs on the shining parquetry floor were of an incomparably soft brilliance. And a golden picture dominated all, a golden Venus of Titian, nude and lovely.

Marcelle and Agatha stood beneath her. Agatha Muller was one of those voluptuous girls whom painters paint in harems, their bodies bare save for a golden bolero covering the breasts, their legs gleaming through pale gauze trousers, their bare feet thrust into golden slippers with upcurled toes. Agatha's beautiful eyes were languid for love; her beautiful mouth, the lips a little parted, awaited love breathlessly and gaily.

Marcelle, beneath the Venus, stood with lowered head. I drew near; a faint perfume enveloped me; I seemed to be entering fairyland. I had not imagined that such perfection as Marcelle's existed. Her brow was as translucent and pure as pearl. And the delicate brilliancy of her colouring—the clear pink flush, the red mouth—surpassed the colouring of the loveliest flowers.

As we shook hands her pale lids lifted, and her eyes, her smile, rained on me, as before, strange floods of joy and pain.

When the two girls moved there was a tiny tinkle of unseen bells.

"You're wearing bells!" I cried, as we gathered round the tea-table. "Is it bracelets?"

They looked at one another and laughed. They extended their wrists. No, it was not bracelets.

"Anklets?"

Again they shook their heads and laughed, lifting their skirts to show their silken ankles. No, it was not anklets.

"Then——"

But Muller interrupted us. "Pour the tea, Aggie." And turning to me, he said, with a kind of severe tolerance, "Don't think badly of the little bells. These youngsters have no mothers."

I mused, as I sipped my tea, "A clever chap. He understands girls. Girls in their innocence do daring things, but they mean no harm—at least they mean no great harm—they don't mean what we think they mean."

After tea we visited the picture gallery. Then we visited the music-room, where Muller played Chopin for us beautifully. While his sister turned the leaves of the score, Marcelle and I sat on a sofa side by side.

At first we were silent. I kept my eyes fixed on the young girl. How beautiful her hair! How pure and proud her profile! And the grace of her drooping, listening pose, as she sat with crossed knees, her palm supporting her cheek!

It delighted me to look at her. 'And looking at her, my head swam, delicate, chill tremors ran over my flesh,

while warm waves of happiness like wine flowed through me. "Ah," I thought, dizzy, hot and cold at the same time, "ah, to sit and look at her for ever! Who would ask more of life?"

And I looked at her bright, soft hair where it sprung in a lovely line from the translucent brow. I looked at her pure profile. I looked at her fresh mouth. I looked at her slim foot in its little shoe. Her beauty was perfect, perfect to the last detail. "How must it feel," I thought in awe, "how must it feel to be perfectly beautiful like that!"

Of course she knew that I was looking at her. For now her lips were slightly parted, a delicate flush had risen to her cheeks, her young, slim bosom rose and fell.

And at last she turned her eyes slowly upon me. Her clear and liquid eyes looked with a kind of timid boldness into mine. She smiled a little, tremulous, tender smile.

With dry lips I said:

"At last I've met you."

"It didn't take you long," said she.

"It seemed long."

"Long? But it was only day before yesterday!"

"It seemed long," I repeated.

She regarded me with her tender smile. Then—

"Why do you live alone, like a recluse?" she asked mischievously.

Recluse—there was that word again.

"I've only been living alone a few months," I said.

"But why do you live alone at all?" And here she laughed heartily, half closing her bright eyes, throwing back her head, so that in her open mouth I saw the delicious, curving row of small, white, even teeth. "Why

do you breakfast in the afternoon and lunch at nine in the evening?"

"I've given all that up," I said, "since the day I saw you sleighing."

She smiled incredulously.

"Mr. Muller says you once fought a bully for his sake. He says you took a licking bravely."

"A licking! But I wasn't licked—I won!"

She smiled incredulously again.

"Muller," I called across the room, "Muller, you're mistaken about that fight of mine. Sheridan didn't lick me. I licked him."

As he played on, his face upturned to the ceiling, Muller gave a loud laugh.

"Don't you believe me?" I cried.

"No!" laughed Marcelle. "No, of course we don't!"

And she rocked back and forth, she clapped her hands, while at the piano Muller and his sister exchanged a wink.

Muller now struck up a melody full of the gay, unreal sensuality of the music-hall, and in her elegant gown Agatha Muller, with arms outstretched, advanced in a kind of dainty and amusing rather than vulgar *danse du ventre*, and then began to sing in her rich voice a song entitled "Every Little Movement has a Meaning all its own."

"Why are you a recluse?" Marcelle repeated.

"Thanks to you, I'm no longer a recluse," said I.

"Why were you a recluse, then?"

"Because I hated the world. The world seemed all wrong."

She looked at me in perplexity, knitting her brows; and, as she turned, the little, hidden bells tinkled.

"How do you mean all wrong?" she asked.

I told her some of the thoughts that I had evolved in my lonely nights before the fire in the library of Banaker House—how the world was ruled by vile and greedy parasites, how the good did the world's work, while the vile, greedy parasites filched from the good all the pay, all the reward. Turning from this evil, I prepared to attack the evil of marriage; but something—her child-like and wistful beauty, perhaps—deterring me, and I attacked the evil of religion instead.

"Oh, religion doesn't count any more," she interrupted eagerly. "Listen, I want to do good, too. Perhaps I'll study to be a doctor. Or perhaps I'll take up college settlement work, sociology, you know. What do you advise?"

She leaned towards me impulsively, her elbow on her knee, her chin upon her hand, and while her eyes glowed with the noblest altruism, the little bells emitted a mocking tinkle.

Thus Marcelle and I conversed, our minds fixed resolutely on high and noble themes, while Muller now played Chopin, and now accompanied his sister as she sang, in a beautiful voice, American songs that illustrated our admirable but slight American humour—songs with such titles, for example, as "Who paid Mrs. Rip Van Winkle's Rent while Mr. Rip Van Winkle was Away?" And the little, hidden bells tinkled, tinkled. And Marcelle's eyes kept meeting mine with timid effrontery. And the nude Venus across the hall smiled and smiled. It was all most distracting, most confusing. No wonder I was dizzy, hot and cold at the same time.

IV

I WAS invited the next week to a dinner and concert given by C. Columbus Muller for Marcelle. I drove up, the evening of the dinner, early. The great grey, mediæval pile shone like a lighthouse on the night, every window from top to bottom brilliantly illuminated. And within I was astonished by the beauty of the flowers. In the grey hall flowers were everywhere; they filled the air with sparkle and grace; while above, dominating all, above on the landing of the tapestry-hung stairway, Marcelle, in a white gown, stood with her host under a canopy of roses.

"Will you sit with me," I said, "during the concert?"

"Yes, if I can," she answered. And she let her hand linger in mine, then drew it gently, reluctantly, away.

In the gallery that looked down on the hall I found Oliver Muller. Oliver leaned languidly against a pillar. His evening clothes were of bottle green, and in lieu of cuffs he wore lace ruffles. Otherwise his dress was quite conventional.

"Father is delighted," he said. "They are all here—the smart set, the seedy set, your set—all of them."

"Dear me!" I did not know whether to smile or to frown.

For the Mullers were climbers. Well, it behooved them, then, to climb with awe, with reverence. But Oliver Muller's air—

"Dear me!" I repeated, in a slightly sarcastic tone. Yet I liked Oliver Muller. I liked his father, too.

C. Columbus Muller was perhaps the first of our multimillionaires to build in New York an extravagantly beautiful house and to storm New York with extravagantly beautiful entertainments.—The chairs one sat on at C. Columbus Muller's had belonged to Louis XVI, Philip II, la Pompadour. The paintings one admired were Rembrandts and Raphaels and Botticellis. That dark, rich desk of marquetry in the corner was signed "Riesener," and the coffee one sipped from it after dinner, while Ysaye played Beethoven, had been supervised by a chef from Ciro's.—But the climber is always ludicrous. We aristocrats love nothing better than to accept a climber's hospitality and then insult him with coarse jokes and slights. Yet somehow, in that mediæval pile, amid that unexampled luxury and splendour, it was difficult to insult Columbus Muller. A grave, thick-set, silent man, with a pointed beard and Oriental eyes, he was a difficult climber to insult—especially since he belonged to John Dee's gang—

"Father thought it would be hard to get them all here." Oliver Muller yawned behind his hand, and I shuddered at his lace ruffles. "But I told father it was only a matter of being rich enough." He yawned again. "Father's rich enough."

I looked down into the grey hall where one line of guests swathed in furs and wraps waddled hurriedly towards the retiring-room, while another line of guests in the slim elegance of evening dress moved with proud and languid grace towards the stairway. I knew those guests. Their names—Baker, Groome, Plummer, Cooper, Shoemaker—suggested a plebeian origin; but,

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as a matter of fact, they were all, like me, descended from noble, even royal houses. And I glanced from them to Muller. The effeminate and enormous youth, leaning against his pillar, had an air of good-humoured tolerance. Good-humoured tolerance—it seemed, somehow, the proper air—and, instead of insulting him, instead of hinting sternly that he was a mucker, I said:

"You are an acquisition to New York. This beautiful house—your pretty sister— A real acquisition."

He laughed, he seemed well enough pleased, and we separated to seek out our dinner partners.

I took in Mary Taylor. The Taylors descended from seven colonial governors, but their dingy dwelling in West Eleventh Street was ugly with Rogers groups, with body-Brussels carpets, with the unspeakable oil portraits of the seven governors.

"Brian," said Mary Taylor, "did you ever see such a house?"

"Never."

She glanced up at the golden Venus.

"How is that for a chromo?"

"It isn't a chromo—it's a Titian."

"Titian your grandmother!"

We dined in the dining-room and picture gallery, which were thrown together. The fifty or sixty guests of most importance sat at a great white horseshoe table, while the rest of us sat at small tables accommodating eight or ten. The soft lighting was beautiful, the flowers were beautiful, and amid the talk and laughter beautiful, unheeded music sounded.

The Astrakhan caviare that began the dinner melted in the mouth. Yes, those sturgeon eggs, black, trans-

parent, as big almost as peas, melted in the mouth like bubbles.

Livingston Chandler, finishing his caviare, took up the menu.

"The copper king does it well," he said. "Look at the wines. 'Chateau Margaux'—'Pommery nature'—'Cos d'Estournel 1870.' This dinner," said Livingston Chandler, with a happy smile, "will have stood Chris Muller at least——"

"But don't you think such a display of wealth is vulgar?" said Mrs. John Brown Butler.

"Why, no," said I. "Consider the Roman patricians' dinners, with their courses of nightingales' tongues. And yet you couldn't call a Roman patrician vulgar."

"That's right," said Livingston Chandler. "'*Parfait de foies gras au porto*,'" he read. "'*Poulardes soufflées au champagne*.' '*Asperges vertes*.' '*Œufs devanneaux au nid*.' I thought it was too early for *œufs de vanneaux*."

"Who are the Mullers?" said Mrs. John Brown Butler.

"I'll tell you who they are," said Mary Taylor eagerly.

Amid Mary's long-winded, spiteful and yet reverent tale, Livingston Chandler cried in astonishment:

"Why, Banaker, aren't you drinking anything?"

"No, I have sworn off."

"But such wines as these——"

I smiled and shook my head. "I have sworn off," I repeated.

After dinner I hastened to Marcelle, and we seated ourselves in the rear of the ballroom, which had been turned into a theatre.

Marcelle's modest décolletage revealed a throat strangely youthful, a slender throat all pure and luminous like pearl. Her face was strangely youthful, too, strangely youthful, like a child's, under the heavy crown of thick, soft hair.

"What have you been doing since I saw you last?" she said.

"Exercising and reading," I answered. "Trying to make my mind and body worthy of you."

"Don't laugh at me."

"It is the honest truth."

Her eyes searched mine. They tried to read my soul. Could I, really, be in earnest? But it is hard to read the soul of another, and she cried, in a kind of gay anger:

"What a queer person you are! I can't make you out."

The curtain rose. It rose on Sam Bernard as a German dressmaker scolding a young and pretty seamstress. The seamstress, it appeared, had been ungrateful to him, and Sam Bernard's lip quivered with hurt pride as he reproached her in bitter, bitter tones. But she only shrugged and sneered. A note of intenser bitterness then vibrated in his voice. And we laughed loud and long. The hurt pride, the strange bitterness, of a little fat Dutchman before a pretty and scornful girl—how ridiculously funny! Yet it was, in truth, more than funny. It was art, exquisite art, albeit slight.

When the curtain fell I said:

"Why do you think I'm queer?"

"I've heard a lot about you."

"What have you heard?"

"Oh, a lot. Your wildness at the university. Is it true you were arrested seven times?"

"No."

"How many times?"

"Only three."

"Only! Only! You say 'only'!"

But the curtain rose on Fay Templeton. In her short skirt the actress smiled, while her beautiful, confident eyes, promising laughter and delight, captured her audience before her song began. Her song was "Under the Bamboo Tree." How sweet her lilting voice, how sweet the lilting movement of her gracious body, as with subtle humour she portrayed the charm, the sincere, fresh, touching charm, of youthful love. Art again, though a limited art.

"And what have you yourself been doing?" I asked Marcelle.

"Well," she answered, "to-day I dyed a hat."

"You must be very clever," I cried. "I've heard of girls trimming hats; but dyeing them!"

"I can not only dye and trim them—I can make them, too."

"Why, you're a genius, a millinery genius!"

She laughed heartily, half closing her bright eyes, revealing the delicious and perfect row of her white teeth. "Oh, dear, how silly I am!" she said.

A footman paused with a tray of cigars and cigarettes. I shook my head, but Marcelle remonstrated:

"Oh, smoke, if you like. I don't mind."

"No," I answered; "I have sworn off both smoking and drinking."

"Since when?" she asked with assumed carelessness.

"You know since when." I had intended to speak lightly, but my voice, to my surprise, sounded tremulous, deep. "You know since when."

She bent on me her arch and tender smile—and the curtain rose on the new singer, Caruso.

"Oh, dear," she said, "I don't feel like listening to music now. Shall we go and sit somewhere else? I know a nice place."

We withdrew to the hall. We seated ourselves on a bench in a corner beneath a blue Flemish tapestry depicting a hunt. The lights were dim. The tenor's voice came to us clear and plangent and a little softened. And Marcelle, with an impulsive movement, drew nearer. She did not seem to know that her knee touched mine.

"Listen," she said, in low, hurried tones; "I've heard a lot about you. But you are not a bit like what I thought. Listen—have you been making fun of me?"

I laughed.

"Oh, don't laugh," she cried.

"But it's laughable," I said, "to think of any one making fun of you. You'd understand if you could see yourself, in your white dress, as you sit there."

In the silence the voice of the young tenor rose up, up, a passionate love cry, to the clearest, sweetest, saddest heights.

"How he sings!" she murmured.

"Yes," I agreed. "His art carries you further than our American art." Then, at the end of Caruso's song, I said, "What else have you heard about me?"

"Bermuda."

"What about Bermuda?"

"I heard you met a vulgar, common girl there, and offered to marry her in order to reform her."

"How silly! The idea of me reforming any one!"

"Isn't it true?"

"No."

My answer seemed to please her. She mused a moment, smiling faintly, looking down at her white shoe. Then she said:

"I've heard you don't believe in marriage. Isn't that true, either?"

"It used to be true." Again I desired to speak lightly, and again my voice trembled with profound and sincere emotion.

Her cheeks very pink, her lips very red, her eyes very soft and bright, she caressed me with her tremulous and tender smile. She was in a strange fever of excitement now, a kind of intoxication, wherein she hardly knew what she was doing. Her knee pressed mine; if I drew my knee away, she moved towards me unconsciously till that soft and gentle pressure was renewed again.

"Oh, dear, I don't believe in marriage much myself," she sighed. "They always seem so bored, married people, don't they!"

"I used to think so."

"Tell me just what you used to think about marriage."

"I thought it should only last a little while—a year, a month, a week—till love died, you know."

"Does love die so soon?"

"I used to think so. Take a girl like you, for example, a girl as beautiful as you. You marry, and in a year, say, love dies. Then must you, in all your beauty—must you in all your beauty live the rest of your life without love, like a nun! Oh, no!" And I added, "A girl as beautiful as you—what right has any one man to monopolize her? It isn't enough that your beauty should only make one man happy a little while. Why,

your beauty should give happiness to fifty men, a hundred men."

Flushed, with lowered lids, she smiled and shook her head. With a worried frown I reminded her:

"That, you know, is how I used to think. But then—"

Here, as I regarded her, something compelled me to pause, to pause and heave a long, tremulous sigh.

"But then—" And again I had to pause and sigh.

How pink her cheeks as she bent towards me, how red her lips, how soft and bright her eyes! Her tender smile seemed to proffer timidly yet boldly to us both a happiness unspeakable. And her knee, pressed against mine, began suddenly to tremble, tremble.

"But then!" she breathed.

"But then I didn't know what true love was."

V

HAPPINESS, happiness unspeakable—that was indeed now mine. Life, which I had hitherto found ugly and sad, seemed now in all respects incredibly beautiful; and the future, which had promised me nothing but grey hairs, disease, death—the future which I had hated and feared, now smiled and glittered all about me like a garden.

We were not betrothed. What need, after the Muller concert, of our betrothal? We never spoke of love. What need to speak of love when our very silences spoke for us! I never kissed Marcelle.

I never kissed her, I never desired to kiss her. She seemed above those physical caresses which are lavished on ordinary girls. To kiss her, to fondle her—ah, no, she seemed too beautiful, too childlike.

I asked myself, sometimes in pride, sometimes in fear, why no physical desire mingled with my love. And I forced myself to picture Marcelle in my arms, my lips on hers—but I banished this picture at once with a sense of shame. Mine, I perceived, was that pure love on which happy marriages are based.

A month ensued, a month joyous and beautiful. In the bright, cold weather of the early spring we met, on this pretext or that, twice and even thrice a day. Sometimes we walked in Fifth Avenue with one of Oliver's bulldogs. Now, at a dinner, we sat side by side. Now we hid behind a palm in a dim alcove during a dance.

And all my time, when we were not together, seems in the retrospect to have been spent in open-air exercise followed by long, elaborate toilets in preparation for our next meeting. I sang as I made those long, elaborate toilets. I had grown brown and strong again. And my happiness, my perfect happiness—well, I could not understand it. I continually studied it with gratitude and awe. A happiness like this—and it would last my whole life long, till I was an old man, till I died—“Ah, no,” I sighed. “Ah, no. It can’t be. I don’t deserve it.”

And then, at the month’s end, Marcelle was summoned back to Philadelphia by her father.

“Hang it,” I said, “what shall I do? I’ll be so lonely! I thought you were going to stay on.”

“I intended to stay on,” she answered; “but——” And she paused. She bit her lip in embarrassment.

“But what? Is it something about me?”

We sat in the Muller drawing-room, under the golden Venus, and in the music-room across the hall Agatha Muller sang to Bishop Blodget and big John Murray songs from *The Chorus Girl*.

“Father thinks,” she said evasively, “well, he thinks we are too much together.”

“But,” said I, “he must have some prejudice against me, then.”

In the troubled silence Agatha sang—

How would you like to be
A little bit gay with me?

And Bishop Blodget burst into shocked, irrepressible laughter.

“It’s nothing,” said Marcelle evasively. Her voice

was low and shrinking. "You see, father doesn't know you. The things he has heard are not true—they're not true, at least, as he interprets them. Of course they were only jokes, trifles, weren't they? But father takes them for real proofs of your—your character."

"And so they are, perhaps!" I rose and paced the floor. I felt as a girl with a past like mine must feel when the exposure of her past robs her of lover, happiness, future. "Oh," I cried, "I hate myself! I hate your father! I could almost hate you!"

"Brian!"

It was the first time she had ever called me Brian. The name thrilled us both. It was like a kiss.

And suddenly I remembered that my past, since I was male instead of female, could do me no real harm after my reformation, and I said:

"Forgive me, Marcelle."

With her arch and tender smile she murmured:

"Of course I forgive you. And I'm coming back, you know. I'm coming back next week for Mrs. Cooper Wheelwright's dance."

"Ah, yes," said I, "but Mrs. Cooper Wheelwright, like your father, is down on me, and I fear I can't get an invitation for her dance."

In the silence Agatha sang—

Oh, my! Oh, me!
I'd like to be
As gay as the very old deuce with thee!

And Bishop Blodget's shocked, delighted laughter rolled through the music-room again.

VI

I FAILED to get an invitation to Mrs. Cooper Wheelwright's, and the day after her dance, on my way to take tea with Marcelle, I met Billy Wilkins in Fifth Avenue, and he told me very frankly the reason of my failure.

"You see," he said, "you've got a bad reputation. Some people even think you are a little cracked."

Grievously wounded, I uttered a succession of growling curses, whilst Billy regarded me with an amused, astonished stare.

"But all this is your own fault," he said. "You set out to anger and shock your friends—now you complain because they are shocked and angry."

"But to accuse me," I protested, "me—a mere boy—of being a drunkard, a libertine and a lunatic! Surely they don't believe that, do they?"

"Yes."

"But it isn't true."

"It's partly true," said Billy Wilkins calmly; "all except the lunatic end, that is."

"True? It's false, false," I declared.

"Well, true or false," said Billy, "it lost you an invitation to Mrs. Cooper Wheelwright's." He now shook my hand heartily. "But you can recover your good name again. In three or four years you can live down the past."

"Three or four years!"

But Billy, with a nod, leapt into a passing hansom, and I was left alone. Three or four years? Three or four years of monklike asceticism and conformity ere I could persuade the world's Cooper Wheelwrights and Fernando Tohrs that I was not a drunkard, a libertine and a lunatic? What nonsense! And yet—

Before me uprose the grey façade of a club to which, after figuring on its waiting list since the age of two, I had just been elected. I delighted, sitting at one of the vast windows of this club, my hat pushed back from my forehead and my hands folded on my stick, to look out on the Fifth Avenue throng with an abstracted, gloomy air. And so I entered the club now; I took my favourite seat; and for once there was nothing feigned in my air of abstracted gloom. For once I did not see the reverent throng below.

"Three or four years, eh?"

Thus I summed up my half-hour's meditation, and, rising, I resumed my way towards the tea-room gloomily.

Marcelle awaited me with an elderly attendant who made off on my appearance.

"Why, Brian, how strange you look!"

"Do I look strange?" I said.

"And why do you stare at me like that?" She laughed uneasily. The slim, pale figure stirred uneasily in the depths of the great chair. "I don't understand you to-day."

"Don't you?" I said.

"Brian, you didn't get to Mrs. Cooper Wheelwright's dance last night!"

"No. I am too wicked for Mrs. Cooper Wheelwright." And I added bitterly, "It will take three or four years

to persuade Mrs. Cooper Wheelwright and your father that I am fit to associate with a girl like you."

"Oh, nonsense!" said Marcelle. Thus she dismissed the long probation assigned to me by Billy Wilkins. "Three or four years? Nonsense!" Then she shook her head regretfully. "But I was so disappointed at the dance! It spoiled my evening."

We sat in a dim and distant corner of the huge room behind a little grove of palms that sprung from green tubs. Far off somewhere an orchestra played. With bent head Marcelle poured the tea. Greatly comforted, I looked at her.

How beautiful she was! I looked at her hands, her neck, her foot in its little shoe. How must it feel, I wondered, to be perfectly beautiful like that? How must it feel, with such beauty, to regard oneself in the glass?

And she was as elegant as she was beautiful. The bizarre charm of her rich dress! Yet she seemed ignorant of her elegance and of her beauty equally. In her rare toilets, in her fresh and radiant loveliness, she walked with light, free grace, or she sat with crossed knees in an armchair, or she stood and leaned against a mantel, taking no more thought of her appearance than a boy would do.

There was something very childlike in her beauty. I remembered the childlike innocence wherewith she had pressed her knee to mine. Yes, she had pressed her knee to mine as spontaneously, as innocently, as one child strokes another's cheek.

And now her air, as she poured our tea, thrilled me with vague, delicious thoughts. The young and beautiful head bent over the teacups—surely it meant some-

thing, surely it was a symbol. A symbol of what? A symbol of happiness. A symbol of the clean, enduring happiness of marriage.

"Marcelle," I said hurriedly, "you must be good to me, for you are my salvation. You alone are my salvation. If you fail me, God knows what I'll become. I'll become a drunkard—and worse, too."

I looked at her, and I laughed awkwardly, a little ashamed. But she did not seem at all shocked. In a low and dreamy voice she said:

"I shan't fail you. I shan't fail you."

"How beautiful you are," I said. "Your beauty flows like music through my being. It fills me with joy and pain."

"Pain? Why pain?" she asked.

"Who knows? But the first time I saw you, in the cold pink winter sunset, I felt such pain, such loneliness—"

"Why?" she wondered. "Why?"

"Because, perhaps, I knew you could never be mine. You were too beautiful ever to be mine. How desolate that thought made me! And every man who sees you has that thought."

"Ah, no!" She laughed softly. "Ah, no!"

"Your beauty is joyous and daring," I said, "but it has another quality, too, a tender and pure quality, that makes me dream of you as a young mother. Yes, I dream of you, a young mother, bending with your tender smile and your pure brow over a baby, our baby, yours and mine. And every man who sees you dreams that dream."

"Ah, no," she said. "But I love babies."

Flushed, with lowered lids, she smiled. Then she

turned, and her eyes met mine—her luminous, timidly bold eyes.

"Marcelle," I said, "you know I love you."

"Yes," said she, "I know."

Soft music sounded in the distance. We were alone in the great room. The room was almost dark now. I bent over her. I was drowned in suave, warm perfume. She put up her flushed face sadly. With a feeling of shame, of sacrilege, I kissed, for the first time, her sad mouth.

VII

MARCELLE went abroad with her father in May to spend the season in London. I, too, would have gone abroad, but in this project Marcellle reluctantly opposed me. For, despite my well-known reformation, her father's attitude still remained unfriendly, and the time was not yet ripe for us to meet.

Very lonely, I returned from my New York hotel to Banaker House.

There, in the soft spring weather, I took up again my reading and my exercise. I even planned a biography of Gilbert Allen. Mabel, who was conducting once more her mother's boarding-house, sent me a good deal of material for my biography. I got a good deal, too, from Gilbert's father.

But the biography was hard to write. Overflowing with energy, I would sit down at the Louis Quinze bureau in the library, and straightway it would seem as if some one had struck me over the head with a soft and powerful weapon like a sandbag—mind and body became quite numb. For hours I would sit there in intolerable anguish, groaning, scowling at my paper, unable to compose a line; then, with an oath, I would rush out. Again I would seat myself and dash off a whole chapter, only to find upon the morrow that I had written, not an honest and sincere chapter devoted to my dead friend, but a silly chapter devoted to imitation—the imitation of Henry James's suave intricacies, the imitation of Matthew Arnold's condescending badinage.

Sometimes, to advertise my reform, I entertained a little. The spring was at its height; the lawns and gardens of Banaker House looked their best; and I am sure my visitors enjoyed themselves despite the insolence of a new corps of foreign servants.—Big John Murray was in love with Agatha Muller. The two were constantly crossing the lawns in the golden afternoon light to disappear amongst the trees.—In his high-bred way Mr. Wilkins at dinner tried to get “tips” from Mr. Muller; but Billy, adjusting his pince-nez, told me afterwards with an intelligent and sarcastic smile that Mr. Muller’s tips were not to be trusted.—Mrs. Cooper Wheelwright boasted of the vanished glories of the past, her mother’s balls at the Brevoort and so forth. She, too, sought tips of Mr. Muller, and she, too, lost thereby.—On the terrace, over our tea, Oliver and I talked. He was a brilliant talker. His gentle, languid voice flowed on and on. Though he hardly smiled himself, he kept me roaring with mirth. But in the pink sunset glow Jimmy Sheridan advanced through the sunken garden. He was as supple and cruel as a tiger, and his slight, upturned moustache accented the impudence of his upturned nose. Jimmy called Oliver “Miss Muller,” and pretended to wrench the bracelet from his wrist. Oliver, with a languid witticism, turned the laugh on Jimmy; but he gave me a piteous glance, and I knew well that, for all his languor, he longed to hide his face in his hands and weep. For I knew Oliver Muller truly because I had known him as a child. It is only those whom we knew as children that we truly know. They cannot escape us.

Thanks to my entertainments, wherein I firmly abstained from wine and tobacco, the news of my refor-

tion spread. Soon all portals opened to me. My parents were delighted.

My parents, passing from Paris to London in June, met Marcelle everywhere. The beautiful young girl was, it seemed, a London success. My mother wrote that she was engaged to Lord Devon.

Lord Devon! Damn Lord Devon! Marcelle continually spoke of him in her pretty letters. She continually spoke, too, of the Earl of this and the Marquis of that. She was glad I had not a jealous disposition. It was so nice to be able to tell me without reserve all about her good times.

Marcelle—did I really know her? Her beauty I knew—but herself! And often, pushing back my futile manuscript, I gazed from the window seaward over sunlit lawns, and with this memory and that tried to weigh the young girl.

But in weighing her it was hard to consider aught save her beauty's joyous glitter.

Surely, though, she must have faults—

No—no—

But we all have faults—surely—

Well, there was, perhaps, a certain pose, a certain literary pose. Thus she would carry to the matinée a tiny volume of Milton or Walter Pater for perusal between the acts; and, driving in the Park, she would keep her pretty nose buried in Euripides.

Was she sometimes affected? Did she sometimes put on airs? But they were such pretty airs! And, unlike the airs of Mrs. Cooper Wheelwright, they were never put on to insult, to humiliate—their sole motive was a sincere and laudable wish to please.

I suspected her of selfishness because she often asked

of me certain showy sacrifices. I smile now at my suspicion; I know now that a more unselfish creature never breathed. And understanding girls better now, I better understand, perhaps, her motive in demanding those strange sacrifices. Her motive was to display my devotion to her friends, to show her friends how wonderfully, how incredibly, she was loved.

Thus I knew Marcelle—or, rather, thus I knew her not. Alfred Earle I knew, and Jimmy Sheridan, big John Murray and Billy Wilkins—why, given certain crises, I even knew how they would act. But Marcelle—

Since I had never seen Marcelle in any crises, of course I did not know her truly yet. But true knowledge would come with time; and this true knowledge would not disappoint me.

I smiled. I told myself firmly and joyously that Marcelle's character was like her beauty. I told myself that all her qualities were as lovely as her eyes and mouth.

And I saw her, slim and elegant, seated with crossed knees in an armchair. Her head was bowed a little, her hand supported her cheek, she swung her slim foot back and forth, and in a clear, grave voice she recounted her likes and dislikes.

"I hated to leave school. A crowd of girls can have such fun together.—My favourite sport is swimming. I have swum four miles.—I shouldn't care if I never saw meat again, but I love, on dreary winter afternoons, to loll before a fire with a box of bonbons and a novel.—I get all my nicest frocks in Paris; but for country tramps and riding and all that the things one gets in London are the best.—I hate wine. I hate coffee too. For breakfast I drink a cup of chocolate.—Violets are my

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favourite flowers. My favourite jewels are pearls.—I adore the autumn, when you come back to town sunburnt from the seashore, and the bright, still, cold weather makes you feel so happy, and you wear your new gowns—and new furs—and an enormous shaggy chrysanthemum—and go to the football game—and come home so gay from all that cold air—and put on your very prettiest frock—and dine at a restaurant—and after dinner have a box at a musical comedy.—Oh, yes, I adore the autumn! It is the best season of all.”

VIII

WITH an exclamation of impatience my mother after getting almost to the door, turned back, took up a gold brush, and arranged anew the lock of thin hair above her temple.

"We'll meet Marcelle on the terrace," she said.

"Yes, on the terrace, in the sunset," I agreed.

My mother frowned at her hair, she shook her head, she retired to the door again, then she came back and again took up the brush.

"Oh, dear! This is the third or fourth time now I've tried to make my hair look better."

With strokes and pats she teased the thin lock a long time. Then she gave a low, angry laugh, and dropped the hairbrush on the dressing-table.

"How foolish I am," she said. "What is the difference how my hair looks? I'm only an old woman."

I, too, had been thinking, "Why trouble so, at her age, about her hair?" But now, before my mother's self-contempt, her sad and bitter self-contempt, my heart was torn horribly with pity.

"You old!" I cried. "You! Why, you ought to be ashamed to talk so!"

Lies. Lies which I uttered feebly and mournfully. Yet they comforted my mother. She became cheerful again. "It does look better now," she said.

It was midsummer. Banaker House was full of guests. On the terrace, in an amber light, we awaited Marcelle.

The terrace, which had formerly been a sparkling turmoil of flower-beds and palms and fountains, was now, in accordance with the architect's original design, an austere plain of red gravel, its only ornament a series of marble benches, symmetrically ranged before the balustrade of marble with its vase-shaped marble balusters. The terrace was an elevated stage, classically simple, for the enjoyment of the view; and behind it the long, low, white façade of Banaker House rose against the amber sky; on either side of it, fronting the east wing and the west, sunken gardens gleamed; and before it in the sunset light the white drive ran straight between velvet lawns, flower-beds and old trees to the lofty entrance gates half a mile away.

Up the white drive my father's new motor advanced slowly, drawn by two farm horses.

"Oh, how beautiful it is!" Marcelle cried, leaping from the broken car.

She was dressed in blue. She put up her veil to kiss my mother. She gave me, as we shook hands, a luminous look of secret understanding.

"You are so like Ellen Vaughan," my mother said. "It brings my girlhood back."

"The carburettor, Brian." My father, in his smart brown flannels, glanced at his oil-stained hands, then wiped them absently on his brown silk handkerchief. "Or else, perhaps, the magneto," he muttered.

Marcelle laughed uneasily. The sunset was golden all about her. The sunset light dazzled her eyes.

"How beautiful!" She shaded her eyes with her hand, she turned slowly. "Oh, there is the sea!"

As we crossed the marble portico I said:

"Dinner is at eight. Come down early, dear, and I'll show you the house."

Again she gave me that secret look. The bronze doors stood open. She entered the spacious, lofty marble hall, and she ran up the marble stairway's broad and shallow curve without touching the bronze balustrade.

The lights were not yet lit when she returned. The pale hall was suffused with blue dusk. The great doors still stood open. Without shone the stars.

Marcelle wore a simple white gown, her only ornament a string of small pearls, pure and translucent like the slender throat which they encircled. Through the twilight she advanced timidly with supple and girlish grace. How beautiful her feet in their little, white, pointed shoes! How beautiful her face, her delicately flushed and slim and childlike face, under the soft, bright, heavy masses of the hair! How beautiful her mouth!

"Kiss me," I whispered.

Her fresh arms clasped my neck. Her sweet lips pressed mine. Her eyes, seen from so near, looked large and sad.

"I wish," I said, "I wish—"

"Patience. Patience."

"But your father—"

"Patience, dear. Father is coming round."

"Why does he mistrust me so? I've done—er—very little."

"Very little! But suppose I had done as much! Wouldn't your father mistrust me?"

With an apologetic cough a servant entered. In the distance guests were heard. Marcelle reluctantly withdrew from my embrace her sweet, fresh body in its

dress as of white foam. We began our tour of Banaker House.

First I pointed out the beauties of the lofty white hall—the still bright Gobelins tapestry on the west wall, the magnificent Riesener commode beneath it, and the two delicately carved armchairs, one on either side of the commode, with their covering of pure silk Gobelins.

"My grandfather," I said, "bought those chairs in Paris for a song, and Duvine offered us four thousand dollars for them last winter."

We passed into the blue drawing-room. The dusk made the room seem vaster than it was. On the ceiling the naked girls reclining on blue clouds looked far away and dim. The gilt carving of the blue chairs and sofas gleamed faintly. The pattern of the blue Aubusson carpet was vague. The Fragonard was vague above the marble chimney.

"Show me your blue Ming vases," said Marcelle.

"No; it is too dark," said I.

At the long row of open windows dreamed the mid-summer night with its host of fireflies and stars.

"How sweet," she said, "the night air is. It smells of sea and honeysuckle." She went out on to the portico. "And look at the fireflies!"

The fireflies, in luminous billows, rolled back and forth. In luminous waves they sank and fell. In luminous breakers they crashed into one another, as in a furious, soft and silent battle.

"How beautiful!" she said. "Shall we go out and walk in them?" She seized my hand. "Yes, come!"

But Billy Wilkins and Hilda Blodget advanced, and our walk among the fireflies must be abandoned.

"Brian has changed so," said Billy. His intelligent

smile, bent on Marcelle, was kind as he added, "It is your influence, isn't it?"

"No! Oh, no!" she answered confusedly.

"Why, I haven't changed," said I.

"Yes, you have!" Billy adjusted his pince-nez.
"Didn't you use to believe that business was theft and marriage a sin?"

"How very interesting!" cried Miss Blodget, and she laughed a musical and mirthless laugh like that of her uncle the bishop. Miss Blodget and Billy would probably make a match of it. They had both a clean, cool, English look. They had both clear, calm, somewhat hard and shallow eyes. "How very interesting! Tell us about business and marriage, Mr. Banaker."

In the deepening twilight, as we stood on the marble portico, Marcelle's face was troubled. To comfort her I said:

"Marriage is beautiful. It's only a sin when it isn't a true marriage."

"Ha, ha! I told you he'd changed!" laughed Billy. But Marcelle continued to frown.

"As for business," I laboured on; but Marcelle interrupted me almost rudely.

"Oh, hang business!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed Billy and Miss Blodget. "Ha, ha, ha! Hang business!" And they walked gaily and slowly down the long portico side by side.

"I don't like them," said Marcelle. "They're so—so-smug! And can't you see they're making fun of you?"

"Oh, no!" Believing myself superior to Billy and Miss Blodget, I was sure they would not dare to make fun of me. "Oh, no, no! You're wrong there."

But Marcelle, frowning gloomily, repeated, "Yes, they're making fun of you, and it's very strange you can't see it."

I took Agatha Muller in to dinner. My parents, at my request, had accepted the Mullers without demur. For my parents, despite the Temples of Templeton Hall, despite the Princes of Powys (Wales, seventh century), were never as exclusive as their social position warranted. My parents never used their social position as a bludgeon. In fact, they never mentioned their social position. My parents, in a word, were, socially speaking, poor stuff. They would have accepted a plumber rather than point out to him how vulgar and worthless he was beside themselves. They would have accepted a magazine editor rather than hurt the poor devil's feelings.

Agatha was on her good behaviour for my mother's sake. "Your mother is a dear, old-fashioned duck," she said. "But I shan't dare to smoke. And I know she thinks I'm too décolletée. Am I?"

"Are you what?" said Jeremiah Ludlow gallantly from Agatha's other side.

"Am I too décolletée?" said the artless girl.

My abstinence from wine occasioned a good deal of joking among the young people about me. Amid this joking—a tribute, after all, to my will power—I could not but feel foolishly proud. But Marcelle, at the end of the long table, frowned and frowned. Above my battery of empty wineglasses I looked at her in inquiry repeatedly; but, each time her eyes met mine, she frowned and turned away her head.

On the terrace, after dinner, I found her leaning on the balustrade alone.

"What was the matter with you, dear?" I said.

She turned and stood erect, her hands on the balustrade. She regarded me gravely. Her slim face and arms and bosom had a mystic beauty in the moonlight.

"I want you to begin to drink and smoke again," she said.

"Do you? But I thought—"

And I looked at her in amazement.

"No! Begin again," she said. "This way you're too—too—conspicuous."

"All right," I said. "I don't mind beginning again." I mused a moment. Then I chuckled foolishly. "I'm rather glad to begin again, in fact."

Marcelle's air was sombre, almost threatening, as she said, "I know you won't abuse it."

"Abuse it!" I cried. "Abuse it—when you care—"

As on the portico, during the exposition of my views about business and marriage, so now, on the moonlit terrace, Marcelle regarded me with grave, considering eyes. She studied me carefully, calmly, a little scornfully, as a wise mother studies her child. "I'll take you in hand," her gaze said. "I'll improve you. I'll mould you."

And I was delighted. Yes, it delighted me unspeakably to be taken in hand, moulded and improved, by this beautiful girl.

For our little dance, which began at ten, the Banakerburg band from the Blue Mill supplied powerful blasts of dance music. Tommy Rowe played the bass horn in the band. I presented him to Marcelle at supper.

"Jimmy Sheridan," I told her, "never knocked me

out, but Tommy here once did. Tommy, do you remember the day when I was monitor, and you knocked me out with a punch in the bread-basket?"

"Why, no; I never knocked you out, Brian. It wasn't in me."

"That's his politeness," I explained eagerly to Marcelle. Then I turned to him again.

"Oh, you remember—I know you do. I was monitor, and you had on a queer, black, tight-waisted coat, with a double row of big white buttons down the front."

Tommy smiled. "An old coat of my mother's cut down for me."

"I knew he remembered," I cried. "Look at him. He's not tall, but he's built like a bull. A regular acrobat, too. Tommy, do you remember the day you walked round the square on your hands?"

He smiled again, playing absently with the spitcock of the huge horn which was propped against his knee. His broad, flat face was gentle and childlike. His dark hair curled close on his round head. His heavy, muscular figure, in the tight uniform of red and yellow and pink—red trousers, yellow coat, pink trimmings—had the ease which comes from beautiful proportions alone. I filled his plate with *parfait au chocolat*; I filled his glass with wine; I glanced at Marcelle anxiously, hoping that she would like him.

"Are you married, Mr. Rowe?"

"Yes, ma'am."

"Have you any children?"

"Yes, ma'am."

"How many?"

"Only one. But then, you see, I've only been married a little over a year."

"What is the baby's name?"

"Brisbane—Brisbane Rowe. The old man named him. After Arthur Brisbane, you know—Arthur Brisbane, the famous socialist reporter. The old man's a rank socialist."

"Little Brisbane Rowe—I'm sure he's a dear," said Marcelle. "I must send him a present. Would he like a silver mug?"

"Yes, ma'am."

When Tommy, the bass horn swathed in baize, came at the dance's end to bid me good night, I led him into the billiard-room for a night cap.

"So you're married, eh?" I said, and after I had mixed two tall and hissing glasses I held a light to his cigar.

"Yes, Brian; and so will you be soon."

"How do you know?"

"Oh, I can see it. She's a beauty, too. But don't let her wear the breeches."

I gave a condescending laugh. These married people! Because they have made a hash of it themselves, why must they all think that we, too, are going to make a hash of it?

"Don't let her wear the breeches, eh? Well, do you think there's any danger, Tommy?"

"Do I think it? I know it. If you could see the way she looks at you! But they're all alike."

"All alike? Nonsense!"

"They're all alike," Tommy repeated. "They all want to wear the breeches. Maybe it would be better if we let them, too."

"Right you are about that end of it," I said thoughtfully, pouring a little more whisky into my glass.

And now for a long while we talked of old times. We talked of our swims and smokes and dangerous, zigzag rides down the river in Rudy Gallatti's yellow boat. It was pleasant to remember old times. The Farplug brothers, it seemed, had both married ugly girls for their money. They had then bought out Neil McGlinchey's grocery. Rumour said they sanded the sugar, a charge which I could easily believe.—And the night air, odorous of sea and honeysuckle, flowed in through the open window. We leaned back luxuriously on our armchairs' soft cushions of brown leather. A white moth whirred in out of the dark, flew straight to the heart of a candle flame, and died.

"What makes them fly into a flame like that?" said Tommy, as he brushed the dead moth from the table.

"It is love," said I. "The beauty of the flame attracts them as fatally as the beauty of a sixteen-year-old chorus girl attracts a septuagenarian millionaire."

Tommy mixed in silence our third whisky and soda.

"Speaking of love," he said, "I'll tell you how I came to get married. It's a queer yarn, Brian. You see, I was only making seven dollars a week in the dye-house then. I was a kettle-stirrer, if you know what that is. And I had to help keep the old man, too. So marriage, of course, seemed out of the question, didn't it?

"Well, anyhow, I was going steady with Mary Burton, one of the cop winder girls. She got four dollars. We were together a lot—every night and all day Sunday—spooning and—er—so forth. We couldn't get married. But—I hardly know how it started—one hot summer Sunday afternoon——"

He paused. A far-away look came into his eyes. He saw, it was plain, a certain picture very vividly. But his lip curled, as if he found this picture repugnant rather than exquisite. I waited patiently. With a start he came to himself.

"Where was I? Oh, yes! Well, the upshot was, I got her in trouble."

With his honest eyes he looked at me calmly from the depths of his brown armchair. Thanks to his three nightcaps, he saw no harm, no indecorum, in this confidence.

"She kept shilly-shallying, putting it off. And she began to get downhearted. She got haggard, too. Her face was drawn, and she had a poor colour—a kind of greenish grey. And her temper got nasty. At last she came out with it: she wanted to get spliced: she wanted her baby.—'But,' I said, 'with only seven dollars—' She was obstinate, though. She was bound to have her way. And she burst out one night and sobbed and cried and said she wouldn't go to that man, no, not even if I never married her."

Tommy looked at me with wide eyes. Then he said: "I ought to have been ashamed."

He compressed his lips; he shook his head.

"But me with seven a week and the old man to keep. And hard times everywhere. And winter coming on. Phew!"

"Tommy," I said, "why didn't you call on me?"

"Ah, no, Brian. You'd forgotten all your old friends."

"Nonsense. No more than they'd forgotten me."

Tommy smiled. He shrugged his powerful shoulders. Then he went on:

"Women are different from men, Brian. We men can't understand the way a woman cares for a baby. We never care for anything in that way. Such love—why, it's ridiculous. A mighty good thing for the babies, though. A pretty thing to see, too. A mighty pretty thing to see. A young mother, bending over her baby—there's a sight that makes a man feel small and useless somehow.

"Well, of course, Brian, when I saw what it meant to her, I gave in. I married her straight off. I'd have been a fine fellow to let her go through it all alone now, wouldn't I? Her, with no money, to go through all that pain, all that shame, and me to stand off and leave her alone! Me to stand off and see her, in her shabby clothes, with her little baby, trudging down the street, and all the people winking and sneering—ah, no! No, siree!

"So I gave in, and I've never regretted it, either. We got on fine from the start. The old man went to work. Mary opened up a chicken farm. I took a correspondence course, and I'm electrician at the mill now—an eighteen-dollar job. And when I think of Brisbane—when I think of what I wanted to do—Brisbane is such a fine little—"

He paused. He stared in amazement at something behind me. I turned my head.

My father, in a radiant smoking-suit of purple and gold, stood in the doorway with Marcelle. My father had an embarrassed air, though there was no doubt of his smoking-suit's correctness. He had brought home six of these smoking-suits—three for himself, three for me—after his visit in July to the Duke of Wessex at Wessex Castle, where all the men, as soon as the women

went to bed, put on the most resplendent smoking-suits, and smoked together till the small hours. But America is not England. Hence in his smoking-suit's blinding yet correct splendour my father was embarrassed.

"When you come to the smoking-room, Brian," he said, "put on one of your smoking-suits, too—the green and orange one, perhaps—to keep me in countenance, you know." He turned to Tommy gaily. "You, too, must come and keep me in countenance, Mr. Thomas Rowe."

And Tommy in his uniform of red and yellow and pink, my father in his smoking-suit of purple and gold, they departed arm-in-arm, each a more gorgeous figure than the other.

But in the doorway Marcelle, a cloud on her beautiful brow, kept her beautiful eyes fixed sadly on the whisky bottle, the soda water bottles, and the two glasses.

"We only had three," I said to her hurriedly.

"I want you to swear off again."

"But we only had three, dear."

"I don't care!"

Marcelle took hold of the lapels of my coat, and, looking up into my face with eyes that were very earnest, she shook me gently as she said, in low, passionate tones:

"I don't care! I want you to swear off again! I want you to be good! I want to be proud of you—proud of you—do you understand?"

IX

IN a gay line, headed by my aunt and Jeremiah Ludlow, we drove to our camp.

Our camp, a half-dozen white tents, was pitched amid some old trees on a green knoll overlooking bay and sea. The old trees rustled. The wind ran over the long meadow grass below in dark waves. All round us the sea's blue floor lay twinkling, heaving, twinkling, in the August sun.

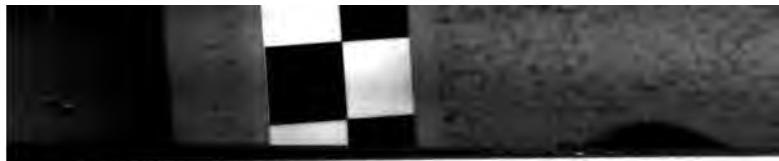
"To think," said Marcelle, "to think we'll be married soon!"

We stood alone at the edge of the knoll, where it broke down in white dunes to a white beach. The wind blew back Marcelle's bright, soft hair; it blew back her blouse of thin white silk; it blew back her skirt of heavy white linen, showing her white silken ankles and her slim feet in their little white shoes with soles of red rubber.

"To think of it!" she repeated.

And she gazed in silence out to sea. Her blown draperies moulded, as if wet, her figure's adolescent contours. In her smile there was something at once august and touching. This beautiful, gentle girl confronted life, pain, childbearing, all the cataclysms, with a serenity like nature's own, a serenity like the wild and glittering seascape's.

I put my arm about her waist. She looked round quickly, saw that the trees hid us from the camp, then, with a kind of hurried, tender violence, she flung her-



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self against me, and for a long time pressed her breathless lips to mine. The sweetness, the ineffable sweetness, of her fresh lips moving delicately in that endless kiss!

But Jeremiah Ludlow advanced with my aunt and Agatha Muller. Jeremiah's bright and tired eyes, set in a cross-hatching of wrinkles, lingered on Agatha. His hands, too, lingered on her at the least pretext. My aunt walked beside him calmly.

"There is the creek," he said. "We'll try to catch some soft shell crabs there."

"And there's the revolver range. Do you remember, Jerry," said my aunt, "how we used to shoot, that summer before my marriage?"

But Jeremiah Ludlow, his hands beneath Agatha's armpits, was helping her over a pebble. Hence he did not hear my aunt. "What was that?" he asked carelessly.

My aunt had turned, however, to Marcelle, and she made no reply.

"And there's our oyster bed," said I, "there in the bay, where you see those stakes."

"Luncheon!" a great voice shouted. "Luncheon!"

A table of new, pale, sweet-smelling pine had been erected between two trees, with a bench of pine boards on either side. Here we lunched gaily.

We all were dressed in white. The girls were bareheaded, with white silk blouses and white linen skirts. The young men were bareheaded, too; they wore no coats; their shirts were open at the neck; their cuffs were turned back on strong brown arms.

Overhead the green leaves rustled cheerily. Between the swaying boughs the luminous blue sky appeared and

disappeared. The beach was a white crescent. The breakers, in long, stately lines, arched, advanced, and crashed in foam—arched, advanced, and crashed in foam.

Our camp servants, who had been three days preparing for our advent, served us a genuine camp luncheon—a genuine clam bake—clams and oysters and crabs from the bay, and chickens and green corn from the home farm, all roasted together in some mysterious way amid hot stones and seaweed.

Jeremiah sat beside my aunt, and with old-fashioned deference kept her plate filled with crab and chicken. But now and then his tired eyes wandered away, settling at last, with a look of rest, of content, on Agatha Muller. And he overwhelmed Agatha with boisterous, old-fashioned gallantry. Now he ate philopena with her, now they pulled a wish-bone. When she turned from him to big John, he came back, a little blown and heated, to my aunt. My aunt welcomed him back placidly. She seemed to be unaware that he had forsaken her.

After luncheon we lounged on the grass with our coffee for an hour. Then we went down over the dunes to have a bath in the sea.

All the other girls wore bathing-dresses with skirts and stockings, but Marcelle, in virtue of her skill as a swimmer, wore only a tight *maillot* of black silk, the tiniest, thinnest *maillot*, such as a man might easily have carried in his pocket.

When she unfastened her bath-robe at the water's edge, revealing her young beauty in her *maillot*, Agatha Muller said gravely:

"Her figure is better than a boy's."

Oliver turned to me. "She is like a water lily," he murmured.

But I frowned and made no answer, for I did not approve of the way Jeremiah Ludlow was staring. Poor Jeremiah, fat and soft in his baggy bathing-suit, stared in a delicious *abandon*, carried quite away by Marcelle's beauty. Jeremiah stared, hang him, as I alone had the right to do.

Marcelle dropped the bath-robe at her feet. She stood and looked at us a moment with a smile. Then she ran across the firm white sand, she dived into the transparent arch of a great comber, she went swinging out to sea with the powerful rhythm of the trudgeon stroke.

We followed her, but, since we had not mastered the trudgeon, she left us far behind.

On the return, she and I swam side by side in the clear water.

"What is the matter, Brian, dear?"

"Nothing. Why?"

"You are so quiet. Do you object to my *maillot*?"

"No. Why should I object to it?"

"But you do, though, don't you?"

"No," I said slowly. "No. For your *maillot* only makes you more beautiful. Well, I'd be a—a selfish coward, then, if I objected."

She gave a little frown. She did not understand my speech. And this pleased me. This showed me how innocently she wore her *maillot* after all. My good humour quite restored, I darted forward, but she overtook me with ease.

"How do you do that stroke, Marcelle?"

"With the feet. Get behind me and watch."

She drew ahead. Her slim legs lay straight out. But, with her slim bare feet, she performed, each time her

right arm swept through the water, an odd, quick evolution, like the turn of a ship's screw.

"It is like a ship's screw," she said. "R-r-r!"

And churning up the water, she shot ahead at an amazing rate.

After we were dressed, big John proposed a little revolver practice; but Marcelle and I wished to go after soft shell crabs instead, while Billy Wilkins and Miss Blodget purposed to read *Degeneration*, a new work said to be heavy, yet at the same time spicy.

The others returned to camp, while Marcelle and I set out for Cedar Creek alone.

"Shouldn't we have a net?" she asked.

"No, no," said I. "We don't need a net. We catch them with our hands."

Fried, with a *tartare* sauce, the crabs we brought back at sunset made the fish course for our dinner. We dined in the sunset light before the tents. The sky was pink. The sea's tremulous silken immensity was pink and bronze. But the air had turned cool, and after dinner we sat with our coffee about a fire of driftwood under the glancing stars, while the wind sighed in the leaves and grasses, and the breakers crashed sadly on the shore. But those dismal sounds only made us, about the fire with our coffee and tobacco, feel the cosier and the gayer.

We went early to bed, and we rose early in the morning. We rose, indeed, before sunrise. The world, before sunrise, seemed made of silence and blue haze. Amid the musing horses, still in the still fields, we hushed our tread, as if we had penetrated into the heart of a still blue dream.

After breakfast we went oystering. I carried a burlap bag, and in bathing-dress, with stout boots on our

feet, we waded out breast-deep into the oyster bed. "I've got one!" shouted Oliver Muller, and he disappeared beneath the water, for he had felt on the muddy bottom the sharp edge of a shell. Seizing this sharp edge with his fingers, he pulled and tugged. The oyster resisted, then yielded, and Oliver came up breathless with his prey, which he tossed into my burlap bag. We soon had a hundred oysters, and our luncheon began that day with a delicious oyster stew.

There was a run of weakfish in the afternoon, and the cat-boat put out hurriedly. But big John and I, though a barrel of weakfish would undoubtedly be landed, had promised to walk into Wearton and buy some clam tongs —for clams were as plentiful all round us as oysters, crabs and fish.

As we returned from Wearton, each with a pair of clam tongs on his shoulder, big John said suddenly:

"Well, old man, it's settled at last. Congratulate me. We are to be married in November."

"You and Agatha, do you mean?"

"Yes, naturally."

"You're a good fellow, John, and I hope you'll be happy," I said.

"Happy? We're bound to be happy." His voice became low and mysterious. "We intend to allow each other perfect freedom."

"Perfect freedom? What the deuce do you mean by that?"

Big John flushed. "I mean what you think I mean," he said, with an embarrassed air.

"A mistake. A mistake, John. If love ends, get a divorce. But perfect freedom—bosh, it's impossible."

"I tell you, it's not impossible. Difficult, yes; for

our natures are still beastlike; but, as we rise in civilization, it will grow less difficult, it will even grow easy. I tell you, Brian, free love is the coming thing. Agatha and I have read it up—Bernard Shaw, Ibsen, Pierre Louys—wonderful chaps, wonderful."

I regarded him disdainfully. He relied on free love now as once, at Peabody, he had relied on a crib which rolled on two match-sticks.

"John," I said, "you don't know what love is."

"Oh, don't I, though!" said he.

"Love," I said, "is immortal. And as for freedom, why, true love could make no use of freedom if it had it."

Big John frowned uncertainly.

"You may be right," he mused. "I feel that way myself at times. But Agatha—"

"I know I'm right," said I.

Big John looked a little relieved; he sighed like one who sets down for a moment a very heavy burden.

"I hope you're right," he said. "If you were right it would make things easier and pleasanter in the home."

Then, sighing like one who takes up his burden again, he added dolefully:

"Yes, if you were right, it would make the home life less formidable, certainly. But Agatha and Ibsen—"

Marcelle, as we drew near the camp, ran forth to meet us.

"Father is here," she said, taking my arm.

"What! Fernando Tohr is here?" I cried.

"Yes, father is here," Marcelle repeated. She leaned on my arm affectionately. "It rests with you now to win him over. But don't be frightened. He's so ready to be won over. He's so anxious, the dear old boy, to like you for my sake."

X

MARCELLE and I were married in Philadelphia on a superb October morning—still sunshine, and a crystal air which the overnight frost made joyous and thrilling to breathe.

Our ushers, to whom I gave pearl scarf-pins, were Billy Wilkins, Lord Devon, Jimmy Sheridan, Oliver Muller, and Marcelle's two cousins, Fernando Tohr, 3rd, and Tohr Biddle Tohr, 2nd. I had asked Alfred Earle to be an usher, too, but Alfred wrote from his sanitarium that all his hair had fallen out. His hair would, of course, grow in again; he was getting on well; but it would be a long, long time ere his cure allowed him to appear among his friends once more. Alfred sent Marcelle a blue morocco dressing-case with chiselled gold mountings.

Marcelle's bridesmaids were, with the exception of Agatha Muller, strangers to me—a group of slim, beautiful girls, girls with historic names, Billy Wilkins said. They wore, after the manner of Marcelle's great-great-grandmother in Gilbert Stuart's portrait, pale blue pannier gowns, very tight and graceful, with the skirt pulled back above high-heeled blue shoes and blue silk stockings; under their tilted hats their powdered hair and patches gave them a cold, insolent, patrician look; they carried long white wands tied with blue ribbon. Marcelle's gift to each bridesmaid was a little platinum wrist watch.

We were married in a church in Rittenhouse Square, across the street from Fernando Tohr's cream-coloured dwelling. All the aristocracy of Philadelphia gathered to our wedding—an impressive aristocracy, of a fresh, ruddy complexion and a simple elegance which my father praised, declaring that it reminded him of the aristocracy of England.

The rich, dim, lofty church, with bars of gold and blue and purple light slanting down from the high, painted windows, shivered to the organ notes of the wedding march. The moment was come. From the vestry-room big John and I, bending to avoid great palm fronds, passed quickly round the chancel to the altar. I heard a rapt murmur, and turned my head for an instant. The moment was come.

Under her white veil Marcelle, in her white gown, advanced slowly on her father's arm amid the shivering triumph of the wedding march. Her bridesmaids followed, insolent and cold, swinging their long white staves with delicate grace. But all eyes were for Marcelle alone. Her veil, like moonlight, made her beauty mystical. Marcelle was like an exquisite moonlight dream.

"How beautiful!" "How lovely!" "Oh, how beautiful!" In women's clear, fresh voices these exclamations fell like flowers before Marcelle's passage.

I glanced at my mother, who stood in a front pew near me. Her lips smiled tremulously, while she wiped her eyes with a tiny handkerchief. My grandmother, hale despite her eighty years, also smiled and wiped her eyes. It seemed to me that a number of women were weeping. Why did they weep? In sorrow? No, not in sorrow; in tribute to life's beauty. For they remembered their own youth, their own loves, their own weddings and

honeymoons—they remembered all those sweet illusions which time destroys one by one. But for every illusion lost a clearer vision, a wider interest, is gained; and their tears were a tribute to the everchanging beauty and the inexhaustible fascination of life.

The moment was come. These suave and plump and splendid figures standing before us were bishops. How musical the bishops' voices! I perceived with a gasp that they were marrying us. Marcelle's voice, too, was musical in the responses, but my own voice sounded husky and humble.

Shaggy gold masses of chrysanthemums, green clumps of palms, were everywhere in the church. They were everywhere, too, in Fernando Tohr's house. There it was difficult, after the wedding, to move without brushing against flowers, without striking a palm's stiff frond.

Our wedding gifts, against a background of blooms, were ranged in the hall on long tables. There were pearls and diamonds and gold cigarette-cases, chiselled silver plate, Chinese vases, and Lalique cups. My grandmother gave me, in a morocco box tooled by Zaehnsdorf, the old volume of Hans Andersen that she had read me over and over ere I learnt to read myself, the volume of *The Mud King's Daughter* and *The Wild Morass*. My grandmother gave Marcelle her pearls, reset by Cartier. Amid jewels and gold and ivory stood tiny, exquisite models of our huger gifts—our town house, our coach, our two motor-cars.

Marcelle appeared for a little while in her wonderful white gown—its lace, of course, old family lace—at the wedding breakfast. Amid cheers and laughter her health was eloquently but inaudibly proposed by my father. Marcelle was serene in this, life's greatest moment—a

little pale, perhaps, but serene, fearless. She soon departed to put on her travelling dress.

Fernando Tohr took my arm and led me aside. He was small and thin and ruddy, very graceful and very handsome, with a wisp of side-whisker brushed out in front of either ear.

"My boy," said Fernando Tohr—and his thin hand squeezed my arm nervously—"you surprised me most agreeably in our interview at the camp. You are confident you'll be very happy, very faithful and loyal, eh? Well, I like to see such confidence. But, at the same time—marriage is a—and Marcelle has a will of her own, a will of her own—and—" He had been frowning and blinking, but now, as if to throw himself on my mercy, he squeezed my arm again and looked up at me with a wistful, helpless air. "But you'll do your best," he said. "I know you'll do your best. I can't ask more."

The smiling condescension, the patronizing confidence, wherewith I reassured the ex-ambassador! And, noting that tears had sprung up in his elderly eyes, I patted his shoulder as if he were a silly little girl. But this manner of mine, this perfect assurance of mine in our undying love, our lifelong fidelity and our lifelong happiness, seemed somehow to please Fernando Tohr profoundly.

When, in grey lounge suit and bowler hat, I entered the kitchen—we were to steal off secretly from the basement kitchen—I found Marcelle awaiting me in a blue travelling dress. At the same moment big John appeared in the doorway. "Psst!"

We ran forth. A merry din rose suddenly behind

us. We ducked beneath a sudden shower of old shoes. "Look out!" roared Jimmy Sheridan from a marble balcony, and with pretended violence he began to hurl old horseshoes. We scrambled breathlessly into a brougham decorated with white ribbon and huge placards—"Just Married." "Honeymooners," etc. But Oliver Muller in his enormous stock put his head in at the window. "There's another brougham for you to change to at the next corner," he said, with a calm smile. "Sheridan has got a brass band to serenade you, but I've headed that off, too. The band has gone to the wrong station."

We laughed, bewildered. Bewildered, we changed broughams. At the station, when we descended, my father magically appeared. My father hurried us to the "Banakeria," which had been coupled to the end of the New England express. "Get aboard," he said. "I'll rejoin you in a moment." And he magically vanished behind a hillock of trunks.

But I explained to Marcelle, "Oh, he won't rejoin us, never fear. That's his way to escape saying good-bye."

Shaggy chrysanthemums decked the "Banakeria's" tiny drawing-room with its rosewood panels, the tiny dining-room with its mahogany panels, and the tiny bedroom with its panels of white and gold. We took off our hats and coats. The express was starting as we passed out on to the observation platform, where two wicker armchairs had been placed.

Still a little bewildered, we sat in silence on the observation platform side by side. The train gathered speed. It tore smoothly and furiously through a russet autumn landscape drenched in golden sunshine.

300 LOVE: BRIAN BANAKER'S AUTOBIOGRAPHY

I drew a long breath. I was coming to myself at last.
“Dear,” I said, as I took Marcelle’s hand, “how happy we’ll be.”

She did not look at me. Her eyes, serene and child-like, were fixed on something far off. But her fingers pressed mine tremulously as she repeated:

“How happy we’ll be.”

We sat hand in hand, hushed and awed before our happiness. We were like two children entering fairy-land.

THE END



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